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No. 106

Shamus O'Brien, THE BOULD BOY OF GLINGAL; OR, Irish Hearts and Irish Homes.

BY COL. DELLE SARA,
AUTHOR OF "SILVER SAM, OF DEADWOOD,"
"THE SCARLET CAPTAIN," "THE LION
OF THE SEA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE WIDOW O'BRIEN.

A LEADEN sky frowned down on the wild, bleak hills of Connemara; it was an April day, but the weather was much more suitable to drear November.

The sky, dark and somber, cast a gloom over the land.

It was early morning, yet there was quite a goodly number of people gathered about a

small cabin situated on the mountain road leading from Ballinahinch northward.

From the cabin one could easily look down upon the site of the town and watch nearly every inch of the road leading upward from it.

The cabin was a mean, miserable hut, rudely built and sadly out of repair, hardly fit for the abode of a half-starved pig let alone a human being.

This was the home of the widow O'Brien, a decent woman and a hard-working old soul, who, with her adopted son, Owney, attempted to get a living by cultivating the miserable little four-acre patch which was attached to the cabin.

The little farm belonged to the estate owned by Captain Desmond Burke, of Twelve Pins. The captain was so termed because his residence was situated near the little mountain range known as the Twelve Pins, which was some ten miles north-west of Ballinahinch, near the coast.

And the peasants of the neighborhood had gathered in force, that morning, because it had been rumored abroad that notice of eviction was to be served upon the widow.

The neighbors had turned out in force, men and women and children, for the old, helpless widow had been subjected to treatment which appeared to them all to savor much of persecution; and the men had come well-armed, too, with their good blackthorn sticks, and more than one muttered threat had been breathed as the little throng watched and waited for the process-server and his gang of constables to appear.

It had been widely whispered that resistance would be offered, and the process-server, Dooney MacDarrow, a dirty scoundrel, who was despised by every decent man in the district, had openly boasted that he would serve the process if it took all the "sodgers" in the district to protect him.

As we have hinted, there were some peculiar circumstances attending the case of the widow O'Brien.

She was one of the many tenants of the large estate held by Desmond Burke, of Twelve Pins.

Desmond Burke, as his name plainly signified, was an Irishman born and an Irishman bred, a descendant of one of the most ancient of Celtic families, the rough-riding, hard-drinking Burkes



THE ENRAGED ASSAILANT NEVER RELAXED HER EFFORTS, WHILE THE PROCESS-SERVER DANCED ABOUT LIKE A MONKEY ON A HOT PLATE.

of Connemara, and the largest landholder in the barony of Ballinahinch, yet not a man was there in the province of Connaught from Downpatrick Head to Galway Bay more thoroughly hated, feared and despised.

The Burkes of Twelve Pins were turn-coat Irishmen, and had been since the time when the Dutchman, William of Orange, marched toward the Boyne water.

The head of the Burke family at that time, with all his sons, four stout boys, had joined the army of the usurper, and three of them had fallen in the bloody, decisive fight, which unseated the weak, unstable James Stuart, and fixed the Dutchman firmly on the English throne.

And when the spoils came to be distributed—when the broad, rich lands of the unfortunate Irishmen who had boldly periled life and limb for their country, their religion and their king, were confiscated by the conqueror, and partitioned out among the soldiers whose good swords had made him, the foreigner, the lord of Britain, Burke was not forgotten; his zeal—his treachery to his native land, was well rewarded; and so it came about that the Burkes, of Twelve Pins, who, by years of squandering, had gotten rid of both gold and land, at a single blow regained far more than they had lost, and became once again one of the richest families in Galway, though few men would have cared to pay the price that the wealth cost them.

Little the Burkes seemed to care, though, for public opinion, and from the first turn-coat, up to the days of the present Desmond, who was in fact the only representative of the old family, one and all had stuck with strict fidelity to England and the House of Hanover.

The O'Briens, on the contrary, had been good, stanch Irishmen. In '98 they carried a pike; in '47 had worn the colors of the United Irishmen; and in all things and at all times had held as true to Erin's cause as the Burkes had to the side of the tyrant and oppressor.

And, as a natural consequence, as one family had risen and prospered, the other had declined and suffered; and so, finally, it came about that the O'Briens became tenants of the Burkes; and some ten years before the time of which we write both families were reduced to two members each, a mother and son on the Burke side, and a nephew and aunt on the O'Brien.

Desmond and Desmond's mother—a haughty dame, nearly all of whose life had been spent in London and on the Continent, and who thoroughly hated Ireland and everything Irish, although she was always eager enough to take the rich rents of her Irish property—and the widow O'Brien and her nephew, James, who, being one of the lightest-hearted lads in the county, the best wrestler, the fastest runner, the ablest man with the old Irish blackthorn, an "illicant" dancer, and, in fact, so accomplished in all the sports and pastimes common to youth, and so popular with everybody, and so thoroughly Irish at heart, so earnestly devoted to his native land, that the old Celtic name of Shamus was applied to him; and so "Mister James O'Brien," was rarely called anything but Shamus O'Brien.

No common peasant lad was Shamus. His father had sent him to Dublin, and he had been educated for a lawyer, but the death of his parent—his only parent, for his mother had departed this life when he was quite young—and the discovery that his father's affairs were so dreadfully disordered that the estate which he had left barely paid his debts, abruptly put an end to this young man's studies.

Shamus came home and accepted a position which his father's lawyer, old Timothy O'Glory, of Ballinahinch, offered him.

O'Glory was the leading lawyer of the district, a little, dried-up, weasel-like man, but possessing a kindly heart and a great knowledge of the law, besides being thoroughly trustworthy, although, like all the rest of the world, he had no objection to making an honest penny when he could.

In O'Glory's dull, dusty and musty office young Shamus met his fate.

Maggie Moore, of Killkerran, was the prettiest girl in all Connemara; and an heiress too, for her father, old Patrick Moore, had been a prudent and thrifty man, and when he died had left to his only child a fortune such as few girls in Ireland could boast of possessing.

The old lawyer was her guardian, and after her father's death she came to live in the O'Glory mansion, a stately pile on the outskirts of the town which was known as O'Neal Hall, so named because the wife of the lawyer claimed a direct descent from great O'Neal of the Red Hand; and though she had been as poor as a church-mouse when she had married O'Glory, still she considered that the noble blood within her veins more than off-set his money; and she never allowed him to forget this fact either, although, to tell the truth, the female descendant of the great O'Neal was of most vulgar habits and tastes.

Maggie Moore and young Shamus became acquainted; their friendship soon ripened into love, he was twenty and she sweet sixteen—dangerous ages, for then passion glows and prudence is not.

Both the old lawyer and his wife were wonderfully surprised and disgusted when they discovered the love affair between the two, and they took speedy measures to put a stop to it, the more so as they were desirous of uniting the heiress to Desmond Burke, who had contrived, in some peculiar way, to make a friend of the old lawyer.

The girl was instantly sent abroad and Shamus discharged.

When this happened it was just at the time of the Fenian rising, and it was an easy matter for the hot-headed agitators to enlist young O'Brien in their wild and desperate schemes.

The attempt failed, of course, and Shamus was obliged to fly for his life—a hunted fugitive.

He managed to escape from the country and was supposed to have fled to America, ever the secure haven of all restless souls.

After a couple of years the heiress was permitted to return to Ireland, cured of her folly it was hoped, and Desmond Burke was encouraged to persevere in his suit, although Maggie never gave him reason so to do.

When the heiress neared her twentieth birthday it was rumored that young O'Brien had returned to Ireland, although there was a price set upon his head.

The authorities never succeeded in catching him, or even in getting a clew to his whereabouts, although Desmond, who was a magistrate and the commander of the yeomanry of the district, did his best to snare his rival.

Nearly a year had elapsed since the report was first started and yet no certain tidings had been had of O'Brien.

Then came the dark days to the widow, his only relative, and Burke gladly jumped at the chance to evict her, thinking that the outrage would produce a tumult and that if O'Brien was in the country he would not fail to come forward, for it was openly predicted that the old widow would not be evicted from her little holding without a struggle.

And thus matters stood at the time at which we commence our story—our ower true tale of the green isle, that unfortunate country which has been so terribly afflicted and misgoverned.

CHAPTER II.

SOGARTH AROON.

THERE were fully a hundred people on the ground, and the men clutched their sticks and muttered many an angry word as they looked down the road, up which they expected to see the process-server and his cohorts advancing.

The process-server, Dooney MacDarrow, was a well-known character, who was briefly summed up in a single sentence—he was the biggest "blaggard" in the county.

When it became known, on the previous day, that notice of eviction was going to be served on the old widow, wide-spread and out-spoken was the indignation.

The debt owed by the widow was only a trifle, five pounds, and many and deep were the curses called down upon the head of Desmond Burke, when his intention to evict leaked out.

It was no secret to the neighborhood that young and handsome Shamus had proved a successful rival to Captain Burke, and that the love which Desmond sought had been given to the proscribed and outlawed man; so, of course, all jumped quickly to the conclusion that malice prompted the act.

The time was ripe for open resistance to the law, too, for the peasantry had been so ground down under the iron heel of oppression that they were desperate, and recked little of consequences.

Nearly every man in the barony was behind in his rent, and each and every one expected that his turn would come next, and these poor peasants clung to their little farms, which, in many cases, had been held by son, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, with a persistence and energy that is really almost unaccountable, except that like trees, they had taken root in the earth from whence they had gained their subsistence, and that removal meant death.

The peasants had been fearfully excited by the news that Captain Burke had determined to evict the widow, and more than one bold spirit had declared that he, for one, would not stand tamely by and see the dirty work go on.

This news had been brought to the ears of Dooney, who was no coward, whatever else might be his demerits, and he snapped his fingers, contemptuously.

"That for thim bould byes!" he cried, in scorn. "It's mighty fine and aisy for thim to say what they will do, but, doin' it is a hoss of another color, as they will find if they dare for to come betune me and my dooty, do ye mind! I will sarve that process on the widdy, if it takes every sodger in Ireland to back me up! Faix! it's foine quarters we have in the jail for the bould marauders that dare buck ag'in' the law."

The process-server was defiant, the peasantry enraged, and the chances for a conflict seemed great.

Dooney thought so, too, for he started forth upon his mission escorted by six constables, who had been sent for from Galway, especially for

this service. And Burke also had taken measures to crush all opposition. The district was under martial law, and a full company of yeomanry, his own company, some eighty men, were quartered in Ballinahinch.

Burke had represented to the government that there was great danger of a "rising." He declared that he had authentic information that Shamus O'Brien's mission in Connemara was to organize an insurrection, and that supplies of men and arms were to be landed upon the coast, presumably from America, the moment the time was ripe.

And the government, frightened at shadows, and looking upon each stranger as a Fenian in disguise, gladly gave the arch-plotter all the power and force he asked.

But no one knew better than Burke that the magnet which had attracted young Shamus back to Ireland, even at the peril of his life, was the pretty heiress of Killkerran, and he hoped to catch the young lover, and, in an English jail, extinguish the hopes that dwelt within his breast.

When the people upon the hillside caught sight of the process-server and his guard, high was their wrath, but when they looked around upon their own numbers, they saw how easy it would be for them to "bate" the satellites of the law if it came to a battle.

"I'll strike wan blow for luck, anyhow, be jabbers!" shouted a stout fellow in a terribly ragged suit. "Phat does it matter if I do go to jail? there's neither bite nor sup to ate at home, and I might as well be in jail for crackin' the head of a process-server—bad 'cess to the likes of him—as to starve outside!"

There was more than one echo to this speech, and when MacDarrow and his guard arrived at the cabin, the way to the door was barred by an angry and excited crowd.

The women in the throng were by far the most violent, and they openly excited the men to "bate" the process-server and his "dirty" crowd.

"If wan of ye raises even a finger ag'in' me, I'll be afther having the law on yees!" Dooney declared. "It's the government I represint, do ye mind that! Clear the way, and I've me put my notice on the door! Don't force me to use violence, or, maybe, it will be the worse for some of yees! I'm a plain-spoken man, an' I'll put every mother's son of yees in jail, if yees are not careful!"

"Oh, go to the divil and shake yerself, ye dirty spalpeen!" yelled a woman in the crowd, who was standing on a little elevation by the side of the road; and as she spoke she flung a piece of turf which she held in her hand at the process-server, and the aim was so good that the clod hit Dooney fairly in the mouth.

The process-server actually danced up and down with rage.

"Oho, Nell Flaverty!" he cried, "I'll have the law on yees for that, bad 'cess to the likes of yees, ye murtherin' trollop! Ye have 'saulted the government, do yees mind that? It is fourteen month ye'll get in jail on bread-and-water for that."

"Oh, bad luck to ye and yer dirty jail!" retorted the woman. "Give me a sthick, some of yees, byes, till I go and bate the rascally process-server!"

Dooney had a "nate" bit of a blackthorn twig in his hand, and as he rather prided himself on his skill with this peculiarly Irish weapon, and with good reason, for there were few boys in Connemara who could stand up against him, he kindly proceeded to invite the virago to the trial which she had threatened:

"Give her a sthick, wan of yees, and I've her come to the fore till I crack that empty skull of hers!" he cried. "Come on now, Miss Flaverty! The flure is ready for yees and the fiddlers are waitin' to strike up; come on now wid ye an' I'll go bail that I will lay ye out in five minutes, dacently an' in order. Will ye come out now, ye murtherin' ould baggage?"

But, Mrs. Flaverty shrunk from the contest, and no wonder, for the "blaggard" was known to be a handy man with his stick, and there weren't any of the men present anxious to face him single-handed.

"Oho, ye don't dare!" Dooney exclaimed, in contempt, when he found that the woman did not respond to his invitation. "It's aisy enough to talk, but it's only talk that ye're afther. Clear the way now till I stick me notice on the door."

But, the people did not obey the command, in the least; on the contrary, they gathered closer together, so as to bar the passage of the process-server; the men grasped their sticks more firmly, while the women doubled up their fists and shook them fiercely at the satellites of the law.

Singly they feared to encounter the redoubtable Dooney, but collectively they felt able to "bate" him and all his gang.

The process-server looked annoyed; he knew well enough that if the peasants stood firm he did not have sufficient force with him to execute his purpose, although the constables were as good men as the force could boast; but, of course six men could not whip forty, to say nothing of the women, and many of the females

present were armed with that weapon peculiar to the daughters of the green isle when on the war-path, since the dark ages—a good stout stocking with a stone in the toe.

Dooney made one last attempt.

"Will you clear the way and I'll have me get at the dure to do me dooty like a gentleman, or shall I be afther killin' a dozen of ye?"

"Be the Twelve Pins of Galway, Mister MacDarrow, ye had better be afther pickin' out yer tombstone an' be givin' instructions to yer heirs if that is the game ye're afther tryin'!" cried the foremost man in the throng, twirling his stick viciously in the air.

"For the last time, will ye clear the way?" the process-server demanded.

"No, no—kill 'em, bad 'cess to 'em! kill the dirty blaggards!" arose in a chorus on the air.

A contest seemed certain when a new-comer appeared upon the scene.

This was the parish priest of Ballinahinch, old Father Malone, mounted on a stout cob, which he had evidently ridden at the top of its speed, as the animal was quite blown.

The father was universally liked, and being not only a pious and learned scholar, but a man of great courage and a strong will, he had a tremendous amount of influence over the people.

Father Malone rode his horse right in between the peasants and the officers of the law, so as to prevent a collision.

"Hould off your hands, me children!" he cried; "don't be timpted by this vile scoundrel here to break the law!" and he shook his finger at Dooney, who retreated a step, in sullen rage. "Remember that this man, no matter how big a blaggard he is, has law on his side, and ye mustn't fight the law, for ye can't!"

CHAPTER III.

THE HEIRESS OF KILKERRAN.

THE priest was a thorough Irishman, in every sense of the word—a jolly, well-meaning man, and yet gifted with a great deal of discretion and a very large amount of that valuable commodity which is called common sense.

He despised the process-server and all his gang; but when he had heard that morning that the peasantry intended to resist the serving of the process, he at once took horse and hurried to the scene for he knew that a forcible resistance to the officers of the law would be productive of much harm.

The priest had arrived in the nick of time, for a minute more a fight would surely have begun.

"Min and women, just think for a moment what ye are about!" the father continued. "This man, dirty blaggard as he is, represents the law; whin ye strike him it is the government ye strike, an' that is what they want. They want another chance to bring the military down upon us; they want another chance to say to the world, 'See these Irish rebels lightin' the torch of war!' they want a chance to hang a few more of our poor boys, or to shut thim up in their dark prisons or to drive thim across the say. Thank God that there is a land where they can go and where they are welkim! But, this day I say to you, min and women, we are not rebels, although we have suffered enough to make any human flesh under the sun turn and fight; but we are patient—we have always been patient; we have suffered, we have starved; we have 'crept into our dark gra's and died,' an' made no sign. The time will come whin the men who rule us will be forced by the opinion of the world to do us justice, an' until then, no violence, mind ye! Stand away from the dure and I'll have this man do his dirty work. He knows no better; it isn't in him to be a man! When St. Patrick banished the snakes from Ireland, Old Nick tried to make up for it by turning some min into cr'atures so like snakes that dacent folks' flesh crawls at their sight, and that manes you, Mr. Process-server!"

"A man must live," MacDarrow growled; he feared the priest, and always avoided an altercation with him if possible.

"Must live!" cried the father, in lofty scorn. "No, sur, I beg to differ with you; in your case I see no necessity for it, at all!"

"Father Malone, it's a shame, so it is, a burnin' shame, that he should serve the notice on the poor widdy!" cried one of the men in the crowd. "Can't we crack his head just this once?"

"Upon me word, ye'll crack the law if ye do!" the priest answered, good-naturedly. "No, no, byes; take my advice and I'll have him alone—I'll have him to the contempt he merits. And don't fear for the widdy; she came to my house this mornin'; she's not within, and there is mighty little there for these jackals of the law to seize upon. The widdy will not suffer at prisent, I'll go bail for that. Give me your words now that ye'll not interfere with this scuff of the world and thim I'll go about my business."

The clatter of a horse's hoofs at this moment attracted the attention of the throng.

All turned to see who was approaching, and great was the surprise when the rider was dis-

covered to be pretty Maggie Moore, the heir-ess of Kilkerran!

She came up in a rapid gallop and never did the girl look more beautiful, for the exercise had filled her cheeks full of roses and the bright pink, blended with the pearly whiteness of the almost perfect complexion, formed a most charming contrast.

A perfect type of Irish beauty was the heir-ess of Moore. Her hair was a dark blue-black in hue, rich, silk-like and wonderfully abundant. Like unto Godiva's, Coventry's fair lady, it was almost abundant enough to serve as a mantle. The eyes were dark, blue at times, almost black at others; the face round, pure Greek in its outlines and exquisitely cut; her figure was of medium height and beautifully proportioned.

Little wonder Connemara said that she had never owned a fairer daughter.

The lady rode at once up to the priest.

"What is the matter, Father Malone?" she exclaimed. "Has aught happened to widow O'Brien?" and a half-conscious blush crimsoned the white forehead of the girl as she uttered the name that report said had once been so dear to her.

"It is an eviction, Miss Moore," the priest answered, "and the good people here being somewhat excited were thinking of acting hastily, but I trust I have persuaded them to adopt a wiser course, although I know that it is hard that a dacent body like the widdy O'Brien should be turned out of her little cabin, like a dog thrust out to die."

"And why is she turned out?" asked the girl, amazed.

"A trifle of rint owin', that is all."

"How much, and who is entitled to receive it?" Miss Moore asked.

"This man," and the good father pointed to MacDarrow, who cringed obsequiously after the manner of his trade.

"How much is the sum?" she demanded.

"Oh, a trifle," miss, the process-server replied; "five pounds."

"Five pounds! and you would turn the poor old woman out of doors because she owes five pounds?" Miss Moore asked, in astonishment.

"It's not me; I'm only doin' me dooty. Shure! if it is only one pound an' they cannot pay it, the law says that they must go."

"It is a cruel law!" the girl exclaimed, indignantly.

She had been so long absent from Ireland that she had very little knowledge of how badly things had been going on lately.

The tongue of the worthy priest fairly ached to say that private malice as well as the non-payment of the sum owed was at the bottom of the matter, but, considering the peculiar way in which the girl was mixed up in the affair, he thought it best to refrain; so he contented himself by saying:

"The law is a hard one when enforced in such a manner as it has been lately. It is not the fault of these poor people. In the first place the crops have failed for two years now in succession, and times have been so bad that the few pigs they had for sale had to be almost given away, and the pig used to be the great rent-payer, ye know."

"Oh, it is a terrible state of affairs!" Miss Moore cried, warmly, "and we that are so favored by Heaven as to be above the reach of want must do all in our power to help those upon whom the hand of affliction has fallen so heavily. I will pay this five pounds!"

"God bless you, me child!" cried the old priest, tears springing into his eyes at the unexpected offer; "you are a true Irish girl, Maggie Moore, and the prayers of this poor widdy will smooth the way for ye, one of these days."

"I beg your pardon, miss," said MacDarrow, with cringing civility. "Do ye happen to have the five pound widd ye now?"

"No, but my word is good for it!" replied the heir-ess, drawing herself up proudly.

"Yis, or for a thousand times five pound, ye impudent varlet!" exclaimed the priest, angrily.

"I beg your pardon, miss, and yours, too, your riverence; I didn't mean the last taste of harm, but, accordin' to law, ye know, I must go ahead widd me dooty if the money is not paid to me on the spot."

"Oh, that makes no difference!" the priest said. "It is the notice which, according to law, he must fix on the dure," he explained to Miss Moore. "It is a formality, that is all."

"Come to O'Neal castle to-day or to-morrow, or when you please, and the money will be paid," the lady said, gathering up her reins to depart.

"There's a trifle of costs, if you please," remarked the process-server, humbly.

"The bill will be paid, whatever it is," Miss Moore replied, haughtily. Although one of the sweetest-tempered girls in the world, there was something about the process-server that excited in her a feeling of contempt, and she was not one used to disguise her feelings.

"Don't mind him, miss; he cannot help it—it's his nature; shure! he was born that way!" the priest exclaimed, scornfully.

MacDarrow grinned and showed his teeth, but there was more malice than merriment in the smile.

"And, Father Malone, if you will have the kindness to call upon me at your earliest convenience, we will try to hit upon some means to aid the poor people of the parish who are likely to be pursued by this man and the cruel law he represents," she said.

"I shall be proud and happy, miss, to wait upon ye," the priest replied, with a low bow.

Miss Moore returned the salutation, and then rode away.

"Where's your manners, byes?" exclaimed Father Malone, reprovingly. "Haven't ye a cheer for the lady that comes to the front to help the widdy?"

The peasants took the hint at once and sent up a roaring cheer for Miss Moore, of Kilkerran.

"That's right, and now I'm off; and, mark me words, byes, kape within the law; thim such vermin as process-servers won't bring the sodgers down onto ye!" And then away the priest rode.

The excitement was apparently over, but there was a surprise in store for all.

CHAPTER IV.

AN IRISH AMAZON.

THE process-server watched both the lady and the priest until they were out of sight, malicious anger shining in his little evil eyes.

"Bad 'cess to the sow! of me fut!" he muttered, between his teeth, "but I will be even wid both of ye's wan of these days."

Then he turned his attention to the cabin.

"Now, gentlemen an' ladies, by your l'ave," he continued. "If you will have the kindness, the politeness, and the civility to step out of me way and I'll have me fix me little notice to the fore-front of that dure, I'll be as good as me word, afther all! I said that I would be afther puttin' my notice on the dure, and that neither man nor devil should stop me. The lady has gone bail for the five pounds but I will put me notice on the dure all the same. Oh! I'm a man of me word; jist bear it in mind all of you! Fall back there an' give me room!"

The peasants obeyed the command and MacDarrow approached the door with his notice in his hand, but as his foot pressed the threshold, the door opened suddenly, and a monstrous big raw-boned woman appeared in the doorway.

"Take yerself out o' that, ye dirty blaggard! What do ye's mane?" she cried, in the richest of brogues.

All the lookers-on stared; the woman was a stranger to one and all.

She was a very large woman, and evidently muscularly built. She was dressed very poor, with an old shawl bound round her shoulders. A dirty cap with an enormous frill ornamented her head, and from under the cap great chunks of coarse red hair strayed out. Her skin was tanned, until it looked like leather, and altogether she was about as ugly, and formidable-looking a female as human eyes had ever rested upon.

Then, too, in her muscular right hand she twirled as "purty" a blackthorn stick as a man would wish to own, and from the way in which she handled the stick, a judge of that sort of thing would have been apt to think that the twig was not solely for ornament.

The most surprised man on the ground was the process-server; with open mouth he stared at the female—a proceeding that excited her anger at once.

"The devil fly away wid ye, ye lantern-jawed villain! Who are ye's a-starin' at, wid ye two eyes stickin' out of ye head like lobsters! Go 'long wid ye! Ye make me blush! I'm a dacent woman, an' if ye don't get out of that I'll give ye a rap over the gob!"

This was a virago, sure enough, and Dooney retreated a step as she flourished the stick in close proximity to his nose.

"An' who are ye, an' what are ye doin' here?" Dooney asked, in wonder.

"Go 'long wid ye! Do ye think I'd be afther wasting me breath in answerin' yer impident questions?" she retorted. "An' what do ye's want here, yerself, ye murtherin' thafe of the world?"

"I'm goin' to put this notice on the dure."

"Deed ye'll do no sich thing!"

"An' why won't I?"

"Bekase I'll be afther crackin' yer head wid this bit of a stick, do ye mind?"

Dooney looked at the woman a moment in wonder; then he quietly put the notice in his pocket, and began to flourish his stick in an extremely wicked manner.

"I'll have to be afther l'arnin' ye's a little good manners," he said, approaching the woman as he spoke, and evidently bracing himself up for a conflict.

"Take care I don't give ye's a taste o' some afore I get through wid ye," the virago retorted.

"Will ye come out of that dureway an' l'ave me put me paper up?" he demanded.

"Will you go to the devil an' snake yerself, ye murtherin' marauder!" she retorted.

"I'd hate to spile that purty face of yours!" he exclaimed.

"It's lucky for yees that ye have no purty face to be spiled," she rejoined.

"If ye wasn't a woman I'd lay ye out!"

"The man never stood in your shoes that could do that same, do ye mind?"

"Here's for ye, then."

And Dooney commenced the attack with a vigorous crack at the woman's head, but she parried the blow dexterously, at the same time with a peculiar thrust beating down his guard and then the process-server got a blow between the eyes that knocked him down as if he had been shot.

The peasants yelled; it was as pretty a stroke as any of them had ever seen, but, although the lick was a hard one yet the process-server had a head like iron and he was up on his feet in a second, apparently not hurt in the least, although the blow had made his head ache.

"Ye can't do that ag'in!" he cried, through his clenched teeth, fearfully enraged at being thus discomfited by a woman.

"Thry me an' find out!" she cried, in scorn. "I rape this stick expressly to dust the jackets of process-servers, gaugers an' sich like dirty blaggards."

"Oh, I'll murder you now!" Dooney howled, as he rushed at the Amazon.

His intention was good enough, but, for once in his life, the process-server had met an antagonist who was more than his match.

Dooney's fierce and angry blows, although delivered with all the skill that he possessed, were parried with the greatest ease by the woman, who seemed to have a wrist of willow and an arm of steel; and the moment the process-server paused in his attack, winded, completely out of breath, she took the offensive, and Dooney could no more parry the blows that she rained down upon him than he could fly.

Every second stroke told.

Whack, whack, whack!

Loud sounded the blows on the air! Never was there a man in this world who had his jacket better dusted—never a process-server as well tamed, since the days of great Brian and Clontarf.

The peasantry were delighted; men, women and children screamed with laughter, and some were so overcome by merriment that they threw themselves on the ground and rolled over and over in their glee.

Dooney grew weaker and weaker; he was fairly being beaten black and blue; and by a woman, too! A double disgrace.

"Oh, murder!" he yelled at last, completely exhausted and sore in every limb; "come an' help me! It is kilt I be! Will ye hold on? I'm bated entirely. Do you want to kill me?"

But the enraged assailant never relaxed her efforts, while the unfortunate process-server danced about like a monkey on a hot plate.

The constables could bear it no longer; although it seemed really ridiculous to think that the strong and cunning MacDarrow couldn't hold his own against a woman, yet it was very evident that he couldn't, and that he was getting a most unmerciful beating; so the whole six, flourishing their sticks, came rushing up to the assistance of their leader.

The peasantry grasped their blackthorns and prepared to join in the row, for they were not disposed to stand tamely by and see the woman who had thrashed the process-server so gloriously, succumb to overwhelming force; but their assistance was not needed, for, as the six came rushing to the attack, the woman, who had evidently kept her eyes about her, with a well-directed blow stretched the process-server out flat as a pancake, stunned and senseless, thus completely disposing of him; then she faced the constables, and in less time than it takes to tell the story, she stretched one after the other on the ground, as fast as they came up.

The strokes were delivered with marvelous quickness, and the lookers-on fairly held their breath with wonder as they gazed upon the surprising exhibition of human skill.

And, as fast as the constables rose to their feet the woman felled them again; no two ever got upon their feet at the same time.

It took just about two minutes for the Amazon to thrash the whole party, and at the end of that time the woman stood the victor of the field, with the vanquished men stretched around her on every side, some of them disabled—stunned like Dooney—so that they could not renew the fight even if they desired to, and others playing 'possum, and pretending to be stunned, having had all the licks that they cared to receive.

And now the sharp trot of horses sounded on the air and interrupted the scene.

"The sodgers! the sodgers!" the cry went up from the lips of the peasantry.

And, sure enough, advancing up the road from Ballinahinch was a squad of mounted yeomanry, coming on at a brisk trot, evidently having perceived the fray from a distance and being eager to take part in it.

At the head of the troop rode a powerfully-built young man, dark complexioned, with jet-black, curling hair and a crispy silken beard of the same hue.

This was Captain Desmond Burke, the sole remaining scion of the old, reckless Burkes of Twelve Pins, and the deadly enemy of the gallant young Irishman who had risked so much for the green isle, Shamus O'Brien.

CHAPTER V.

A FORTUNE-TELLER IT IS!

THE troopers were so near and coming on so fast that if the Amazon had any idea of attempting to escape by flight, a single glance would have shown the folly of trying so to do.

The peasants fell back in great disorder. Desperate Desmond Burke was feared by one and all, and they cast anxious glances at the bold woman who kept her position menacing with the stout blackthorn twig the fallen men whom she had so easily disposed of.

Apparently she had no thought of flight or fear.

"Lie still, ye murderin' blaggards!" she cried. "Glory to St. Patrick! here come the sodgers! Ow, ow! now ye'll all be kilt entirely! It is hanged, drawn and quartered ye'll be, be-cause ye all piled on me, a poor, weak, unprotected widdywoman, ye black-muzzled, black-hearted thaves of the wourld! Oh, lie still, will ye!" she cried, suddenly, with a vigorous shake of the "nate" little stick at one of the constables who manifested an idea of getting up. "Lie still now, I tell ye, or I'll fetch ye a crack on the head that will make ye see more stars than there is in the blessed sky, ye bandy-legged, squint-eyed blaggard!"

The man instantly laid down again; he had had all he wanted of that vicious stick.

By this time the soldiers had arrived on the scene. As we have stated, Desmond Burke was in command of the party; he was accompanied by his second in command, Lieutenant Plantagenet Smithers, an English sprig, who had lately purchased an estate near Burke's place, and who affected to consider himself one of the notables of the county.

The lieutenant was a thorough-going Englishman, extremely affected, very fond of boasting of his noble ancestors, and, to use the *Irishism*—"a gommach" generally.

"Descended in a straight line, you know, from that Baron Hector de Smithers who came over with William the Conqueror," he was wont to say. "You have heard of Baron de Smithers, of course. He was a regular first chop sort of a fellow, you know, standard-bearer, or looked after the king's horse, or attended to the baggage—the treasure-chest, you know, or something of that kind. I've dropped the *de*, because it is so common; a deuced lot of fellows who couldn't really tell whether they ever had any grandfather or not add the *de* to their names now, you know."

Now, Smithers was right about this; he could tell who his grandfather was, for the fame of Smithers's patent oil blacking was world-wide. Wherever the conquering Briton planted his banners, from the frozen north to the sultry jungles of India, thither went the advertising agent of the industrious house and the command:

"Try Smithers's blacking—take no other!"

appeared at every convenient spot.

The grandfather made a colossal fortune; the son set up for an independent country gentleman; and the grandson, our dashing lieutenant, traced back his ancestry, thanks to the money that "Smithers's blacking" made, clear to William the Norman!

"Hallo! what is the meaning of this?" Desmond asked, in astonishment, as he reined in his horse and surveyed the field of battle.

"By Jove! the old gal has felled the entire battalion!" the lieutenant cried.

"It's these murderin' spalpeens!" the virago howled, at the top of her voice. "They saulted me, a poor, lone, unprotected widdy, an' if it wasn't for this bit of twig that I happened to have in me fist, it's kilt I'd be now, entirely!"

Desmond by this time had recognized the process-server, Dooney MacDarrow, who was just beginning to recover from the senseless condition into which the "bit of twig" had placed him.

"Why, it's MacDarrow!" he cried.

The process-server was a trusted tool of wild and desperate Burke, of the Twelve Pins, and many a dirty piece of work had he done for the "master."

"Yis, yer honor, that is the biggest blaggard of the lot!" cried the woman; "hang him, me lord, hang him to the nearest tree an' I'll pull the rope to choke him, the curse of Cromwell on him!"

The process-server having recovered his senses rose to a sitting posture and felt of his bruised and battered head in a way and with an expression that was really laughable.

"Shall I knock him down ag'in, me lord?" cried the woman, flourishing the stick, much to MacDarrow's discomfort.

"For the sake of Heaven, captain, save me from this she-devil!" he exclaimed, ruefully. "She has bated me black and blue from head to heel!"

"An' who struck me furst?" exclaimed the Amazon, placing her arms akimbo in an ex-

remely defiant manner. "I'm as dacent and as p'aceable a woman as you will find from here to the Bloody Foreland, but no man that walks on tin toes shall bate me without my puttin' in a lick for luck. Bad gran to yees, ye ugly-mouthed blaggard! For two pins I'd knock them two weeney eyes of yours into wan!"

"Hold your tongue, woman!" cried Burke, angrily.

"I won't spake a wourd!"

"How did this happen, Dooney?" the captain inquired.

"I'll tell yees all about it!" cried the Jezebel, at the top of her lungs. "It was that ugly, black-muzzled thafe—"

"Will you keep quiet?" thundered the captain.

"I hav'n't said a wourd!" replied the woman, in a rage.

"Now, Dooney, explain!"

"An' if yees do be afther tellin' any lies—the virago shouted.

"Some one of you shove a bayonet down her throat if she opens her mouth again!" Burke commanded.

A couple of the soldiers spurred their horses toward the woman but she flourished her stick in an extremely warlike manner.

"You'll shove no bagonet down my throat, do ye mind!" she howled, indignantly. "Bad 'cess to the soul of me fut, I kin bate the hulls of yees, bagonet or no bagonet, if ye'll come up wan by wan! I'm Peggy McCarthy, the ragman's daughter, an' all I ax is a fair field an' no favor!"

"By Jove! I'll back the old gal!" cried Smithers, who, like a true Briton, never could resist a chance to bet. "Give her a fair show, Desmond, and I will lay you five to three in ponies that she cleans out the whole entire command!"

"Yerself included, me high cock-a-lorum!" retorted the woman. "Faix! I wouldn't ask but one crack at the likes of yees!"

"By George! I wouldn't let you crack me with that club for a hundred guineas!" the lieutenant replied.

"Go ahead, Dooney!" the captain ordered.

By this time the constables were on their feet and had assisted the process-server to rise. He needed assistance, too, for there was not a bone in his body that wasn't sore from the drubbing.

"If ye lie about me I'll whale ye!" the woman muttered, with a savage glance at MacDarrow.

"If she opens her mouth again prod her with a bayonet!" Burke commanded.

One of the soldiers half-raised his weapon as if to be all in readiness to obey the order, but the Amazon placed herself in a defensive position and shook her stick in an extremely dextrous manner.

"Ye stick that bagonet into me an' I'll take the hull nose off of ye—do ye mind!" she yelled, defiantly.

"This is the cabin of the widdy O'Brien, you know, yer honor," MacDarrow explained, "an' I war afther serving the process according to law whin the dure opened and this woman came to the fore, an' I ax her perlately to come an' I ave me put the bill on the dure—"

"To the divil I'll fling yer perliteness!" cried the woman, in a high state of wrath, unable longer to keep quiet. "If ye had trated me like a lady, which I am, bedad! born an' bred, I would have come out as quiet as a lamb, but ye went to bullyragging me likes as if I was a gallows-bird, an' I bate ye well to tache ye manners, ye hoss-thafe! He struck me furst, me lord! Yis, yer honor, he struck me furst, bad scan to him! an' I leathered his jacket for him! I bate him worse than Paddy did the drum, an' I kin do it ag'in; an' I will too if he looks cross-eyed at me, ye red-mouthed gouger, ye!"

"Is that so, MacDarrow? Did you strike her first?" the captain asked, extremely puzzled, and unable to comprehend how the woman succeeded in not only thrashing MacDarrow but all his force.

"If he says that he didn't he lies!" the bel-dame declared.

"I struck at her," the process-server admitted, "but sorra a wan of me blows as much as grazed wan of her illigant red hairs!"

"Ye lie, ye villain! Me hair is not red—it's auburn! It's blind ye are!"

"She wouldn't come out of the dure, an' what was I to do?" Dooney continued. "I couldn't affix the notice with her in the way."

"If ye had axed me like a lady—" the woman began, but the process-server could restrain himself no longer.

"Ax ye like a lady, ye old harridan!" he cried. "I'll have the hangin' of ye yit, do you mind that? Bad luck to your dirty elbow, it's lame I'll be for a week!"

"Aha! ye'll lave a poor widdy woman alone next time, I'm thinkin'!" the virago retorted, triumphantly. "Ye had no respect an' tinder consideration for me sex an' I welited ye a bit to tache ye manners."

"What is your name?" asked the captain.

"Peggy McCarthy, yer honor, long life to ye," the woman answered, with a low courtesy. "I'm a fortune-teller, yer honor; cross me hand with silver an' it's a beautiful fortune I'll tell ye!"

CHAPTER VI.

A COMIC PERFORMANCE.

"Oh, nonsense! that's all gammon, you know!" declared Smithers, who always took everything in the most matter-of-fact way. "You can't do it, you know. I'll bet a guinea you can't tell me what my name is, you know."

"I can tell ye phat ye had for dinner yesterday and phat ye'll have to-day!" she replied.

"Oh, humbug!"

"Will ye lay a guinea on it?"

"By Jove, I will!"

"Mate, yer honor!"

The peasants laughed, and even the soldiers and the constables could not resist a smile at seeing the Englishman thus fairly caught.

"Oh, come; that's not fair you know," Smithers protested; "anybody could say that; that is easy enough to tell. It requires no ghost, you know, to come from the grave to tell us that a man eats meat for his dinner, you know."

"How simple of your honor then to bet a guinea on it."

Again the wit of the shrewd peasant was more than a match for the Englisher.

"Your name is Peggy McCarthy, you say?" the captain questioned.

"Yis, yer honor, long life to ye!"

"And you are a fortune-teller?"

"Sorrah a taste of a lie in that!"

"If you can tell fortunes as well as you can handle that club, by Jove! you must be first chop, old girl!" Smithers protested.

"Do you call this weeny bit of stick a club?" exclaimed the woman, surveying the blackthorn with a look of profound astonishment. "Shure! it's nothin' but a feather!"

"Where do ye come from?" Desmond asked.

"How quare it is that yer honor is so curious?" was the wary rejoinder.

"Answer my questions!" Burke replied, sternly. "I have the right to ask and the power to compel you to answer."

"Faix! ye have got min enough," the woman muttered, with a glance at the bold yeomanry, and a peculiar and very evident tightening of her hand on the stick in her fist, "but if they are no better than these scuts, take away the bagonets an' I'll go bail I'd bate the gang!"

"Answer at once or you will find yourself in trouble!" the officer exclaimed, sternly. "I am Captain Desmond Burke, commanding officer of this district."

"An' phat do ye want to know?" she asked, assuming an innocence that Desmond felt sure was assumed.

"Where do you come from and what brings you here?"

"I'm from Galway, an' I walked every fut of the way on me tin toes, yer honor."

"Your business here?" demanded Burke; he had a suspicion that the woman was other than she seemed.

"Shure! I tould you that afore; I'm a fortune-teller."

"And you are traveling from cabin to cabin telling fortunes?"

"Faix! it is yer honor that's the fortune-teller now!" with a courtesy.

"But what were you doing in this cabin?"

"I lifted the latch an' wint in; sorrah a sowl was there to the fore, barrin' meself. I kem last night an' as I had walked quite a distance, an' was tired entirely, I thought that I would take a sleep until the owner kem back, an' the first thing I knew this morning, I heered the devil's own ruction outside; I kem to the door an' this black-muzzled villain—the curse of all the sins cling to him say I! he gev' me his impudence, an' I dusted his jacket for him, an' that is all I know about it."

"I say, Desmond, old boy! she's a regular strapper, isn't she! If she had lived in the time of that old Prussian King who was so crazy about big soldiers he would have married her to one of his guardsmen, sure!" Smithers observed.

"You will have to go along with us until I can find time to examine into the truth of your story," announced Burke.

The woman began to look alarmed.

"Shure, yer honor, I hope that it is not a hangin' matter! I didn't bate them half as hard as I could if I'd set my mind on it!"

This declaration made the process-server and his well-thrashed satellites look at each other in wonder. If Mistress Peggy McCarthy had not exerted all her strength upon them what would have become of them if she had?

"You have interfered with an officer of the law in his duty—a very serious offense," Burke observed, severely.

"And whaled some of her Majesty's constables in the most outrageous manner," Smithers continued, with a grave face, although in his heart he was really enjoying the idea, "to say nothing of offering to fight a whole detachment of Connemara yeomanry, a very serious offense."

"Oh, wurra, wurra! will I be hanged?" howled the woman.

"Your explanation is not altogether satisfactory, either, in regard to your business. I must

be satisfied that your visit to this district was for no bad purpose."

"Phat harm kin a poor lone woman, the likes of me, do?" sniveled Mistress McCarthy.

"Ye old catamaran!" cried the process-server, "if I had my way I'd string ye up to the nearest tree!"

"But ye'll not have yer way, ye dirty old process-server!" retorted the woman, changing her tone instantly. "I'll go bail I'll get another whack at you, wan of these days, an' I won't leave a hull bone in your skin, do ye mind? I'll mash you as soft as b'iled praties!"

"See heah, MacDarrow, if you'll take my advice, you will go and get your life insured!" Smithers counseled.

"You must get up behind one of these men and come with us," Desmond announced.

"On a hoss?"

"Yes."

"An' how will I hould on? Shure! I'll be afther slipping off!"

"Oh, no; put your arms around the man."

The woman gave an unearthly howl at this.

"Is it hug a man I will?" she cried.

"By Jove! I should prefer a she-bear!" Smithers suggested.

"I guess it won't hurt you any; we will be at the quarters in fifteen minutes," Burke replied.

"Oh, captain dear, ye make me blush!" and the virago tried hard to do so, but the attempt was a most decided failure.

"Come, get up behind one of them!"

"Can I choose me man?" and she cast a simpering glance at the lieutenant, much to Smithers's disgust.

"Oh, come, none of that, you know!" he cried; "you can't pick me out; I won't have it, by Jove!"

There was a general laugh at this, in which even stern Burke joined.

The woman surveyed the soldiers.

"There's a weeney man there," she said, indicating a trooper, "and it's a foine hoss he has under him, too. If you will promise to carry me nice and aisy, I'll ride wid you, sur, if you please," and she advanced to the trooper whom she had selected.

He was the smallest man in the party and mounted on about the best horse of them all, a big gray, that looked every inch a hunter. The yeomanry provided their own mounts, and this gray brute bore the reputation of being the best cross-country horse in Connaught, which was saying a great deal when the many noble steeds of that province are taken into consideration.

The rider, who was the village doctor of Bal-linahinch, Johnny Tims, and a man naturally timid—which was the reason why he owned one of the best horses in the county, so that, in the hunting field, he might escape all danger—was not at all pleased by the selection, but there was no help for it; so he submitted with as good a grace as possible.

"Up with you!" commanded Burke. "Shall some of these men assist you?"

"I scorn their assistance! Hain't I a pair of good legs—I beg your pardon, gintlemen, I mane limbs; an' can't I lape for meself?"

And, no sooner were the words free from her lips than, with a spring, wonderfully light, when her size and weight were considered, she vaulted on the horse's back behind Tims.

She wound her arms around his waist and gripped him with an energy that completely took the doctor's breath away.

"Hold on, ye elephant!" he protested; "do ye think that I am made of sheet-iron? Ye'll break me back in a moment! Lave go, will ye? One arm is enough. Glory to Moses! ye've got a gripe on ye like a steam-engine!"

"I axes yer pardon, sur," she responded, humbly. "I'm not used to riding wid gintlemen."

So she removed one arm, gripped the doctor with the right hand and laid hold of the edge of the saddle with the other.

Burke gave the command and the party moved off.

The doctor and the woman were in the center of the party, much to the discomfort of the rest, for the horse, evidently resenting the double burden, began to prance and kick and cavort generally in such a manner that it caused the doctor, who was usually a very mild-tempered man, to swear worse than the troopers of the famous army in Flanders.

Never before had the horse acted in so outrageous a manner; he soon cleared a space for himself, for the others were compelled to give the fractious steed a wide berth.

"The devil's in the baste, I belave!" cried the perplexed doctor, pulling at the bridle and vainly endeavoring to quiet the beast. "Will ye sit still and be hanged to ye! We'll both be over the head of the baste! Be quiet, ye tearer! Curse it, madam, will ye sit still? What the mischief are ye doing? W'oa there!"

Up into the air went the hind legs of the horse, then he reared up on his haunches and pawed viciously; down he went again and lashed out with his heels in all directions.

"Ow, ow! I'm fallin'! I'll be kilt, ow, ow! Hould onto me!" howled the woman.

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISE.

"Ye murtherin' fool of a woman, will ye hould yer wist!" the doctor shouted. "Your yells are enough to frighten the seven sins out of a human, let alone a poor dumb baste that can't spake!"

"Ow, ow, I'll be kilt!" continued the virago, suddenly removing her hand from its position around the doctor and grabbing him by the back of the coat-collar, and the result of this proceeding was that the doctor was incontinently yanked backward so that he almost slipped out of the saddle.

The rage of Tims was unbounded; he had both hands full to restrain the horse which was leaping about like mad, and now that the woman had grabbed him by the collar, he expected every moment to be tumbled off the horse and then perhaps be kicked half to death by the heels of the fractious brute.

The soldiers, from Desmond downward, were roaring with laughter at the extremely ridiculous spectacle, and as for the peasantry their sides fairly ached with laughing.

Nearly all of the spectators had followed the troop, running along the road in the rear of the cavalcade, which, owing to the antics of the doctor's horse, was proceeding very slowly.

At last the party reached the spot where the little mountain-road led up into the wild rude lands known as Joyce's Country.

The doctor had been swearing at the top of his lungs, first at the horse and then at the woman, whom he blamed for all the trouble, but when the horse came prancing into the spot where the two roads met, standing first on his hind legs and then on his fore, lashing and kicking in all directions, the doctor's oaths suddenly turned into a loud yell of pain.

"For heaven's sake, ma'am, will ye take that pin out of yer sleeve and be hanged to ye; it's two inches into my leg it's run—ow, ow!"

And, no wonder that the doctor howled with pain, for in the hand that rested on the saddle the woman held a large pin which she had been jabbing industriously into the horse's flanks ever since she had mounted. Little wonder, then, was it that the hunter under the spur of this infliction had been acting more like a crazy steed than one possessed of good sound horse sense.

But, by a mistake, upon reaching the cross-roads the woman had jabbed the pin into the fleshy part of Tim's leg instead of into the horse, and the pain of this operation had produced the fearful howl which had escaped from the doctor's lips.

The cross-roads reached, the time for action had come; all the troopers were widely separated, for each and every man had given as wide a berth to the prancing horse as possible. With a vigorous wrench the woman pulled the doctor backward as though she was slipping off the horse, and still keeping up her yells of affright to cover up her trick.

The doctor lost both stirrups; the horse plunged forward and over he went, sideways, compelled to let go of the bridle by the force of the fall.

The woman still succeeded in retaining her position upon the animal, to the astonishment of all, and having caught the bridle-reins dropped by the doctor was sticking to the beast with all the skill of the wild Indian upon the prairie, or the champion bare-back rider in the circus.

All looked in amazement, expecting to see the rider hurled violently to the ground every minute, for not a soul of them had any suspicion of the trick that had been so cunningly played.

The horse had dashed through the rest of the party at topmost speed, all taking particular care to get out of the way for it was the general impression that the gray had run away.

"Ow, ow! I shall be kilt!" shrieked the woman, at the top of her voice, but still sticking to the horse, at which all marveled.

"Throw yourself off, you fool!" shouted Burke. Even cunning Desmond had been completely deceived, and had no suspicion of the true nature of the performance.

A good hundred yards in advance of the party had the startled steed gained when, suddenly, there was a wonderful change in the position of the woman, who was apparently clinging by chance to its back.

With a single good stout pull the stuff dress was ripped down in front, a pair of pantalooned legs, the feet of which were incased in boots, appeared!

Wonderful was the dexterity with which the rider pulled himself forward, threw his leg over the saddle and almost immediately gained both stirrups; and there he sat, the Amazonian woman transformed into a man, and evidently as good a rider as had ever leaped into a pig-skin saddle since the days when the wild steed of the desert first submitted his free neck to man's domineering will.

The wild Irish yell went up from the throats of the peasantry, to be answered by a cry of rage from the lips of the baffled troopers and constables.

Too late Desmond Burke understood the value of the prize which he had in his grasp, but now had suffered to escape from his power;

"A hundred pounds for that fellow's head, alive or dead!" he shouted, in angry tones.

"By Jove! he's what you call a cool hand, you know, a regular cucumber and all that sort of thing!" cried Smithers.

"It's a thousand pounds to a slap on the back that it is Shamus O'Brien!" Burke exclaimed.

The troopers had given chase at once: but, as the prisoner had gained a couple of hundred yards start, and had as good, if not a better horse than any other in the party, there was very little chance of overtaking him.

"We'll make a regular steeple-chase of it, you know!" averred Smithers, as they rode on at topmost speed. We will run him right through Ballinahinch. By Jove! what a lark! first chop fun, you know."

"Fire at him, lads, so as to alarm the town and make them turn out to stop him!" the captain ordered.

But, the fugitive had no idea of going through the village; he knew a trick worth two of that.

When the soldiers opened fire on him he was just approaching an angle in the road; but, instead of turning he put his horse right straight at the fence before him and went over it as light as a bird. And the fence was a "cropper," too, a good five-barred one—a regular "rasper," as Smithers declared, when his horse refused it, and the shock nearly sent the lieutenant over the animal's head into the field.

Burke was the only man who succeeded in leaping the fence, and when he looked around him after leaping, and saw that he was alone, he pulled up his horse a moment to give directions.

The fellow is going to make for Joyce's country, I think; turn back and follow up the road while I will keep on his track."

"But I say, you know, captain!" called out Smithers, anxiously, noticing that the fugitive was cantering leisurely along as if he was not at all afraid of pursuit, "look out for yourself, you know, and all that sort of thing; this fellow is a tearer, you know; I shouldn't be surprised if he was an American, one of those Fenian skirmishing lads, you know, come over here for the express purpose of treading on the tail of the British lion, so as to make that respectable old party howl with anguish."

"Don't be alarmed!" Burke replied, a cruel smile upon his cold face. "I have a brace of revolvers besides my saber, and if I can only overtake the fellow, which I think I can, for my horse has more speed in a long run than his, I'll go bail to give a good account of him."

"If he's a Yankee, take him alive, you know, so that we can get a look at him, and see how much Indian there is in him."

"That is Shamus O'Brien and no one else!" Desmond protested, angrily. "I was a fool not to have suspected him in the first place; but, be off with you, and I will meet you at the upper crossing where the little stream comes down from the hills."

Burke turned and set out in pursuit of the fugitive, who was cantering along as coolly and unconcerned as though a pack of baffled men were not at his heels thirsting for his blood.

With firm-set teeth and angry brows, rough-riding, desperate Desmond pursued the man whom he was convinced was his rival—his mortal foe, Shamus O'Brien.

The captain had set his heart upon winning the heiress of Kilkerran, but he was perfectly satisfied that as long as the young Irishman existed there was very little chance for him.

It was not solely love that urged Desmond Burke on in his pursuit of charming, graceful Maggie Moore; he had an eye to her fortune as well, for Burke of the Twelve Pins was a ruined man, although as yet he had succeeded in keeping that knowledge from the world. He had led a wild, reckless life—had spent money as freely as though five-pound notes grew on his ancestral oaks and golden guineas could be dug out of every bog by Twelve Pins' halls.

But the crash that would reveal his true position to the world might come at any time; he was a desperate man, and like desperate men, clutched at straws. The fortune of the heiress would save him; therefore, perforce, he must win the girl.

To his mind one obstacle alone existed—the young Irishman, bold Jim O'Brien, and that the fugitive whom he was pursuing was O'Brien he had no doubt. The very boldness of the trick which he had played amply proved it to his mind, for there were not two men in Connacht who would have dared to risk so much for so little.

Burke pursued the fugitive hotly, and he happening to turn his head, perceiving that there was but one man in pursuit, at once reined in his horse, wheeled him around, and calmly prepared to receive the captain.

If this was Shamus O'Brien, he had come to the conclusion to try the captain and see what kind of metal the rough-riding Burkes of Twelve Pins were made of.

CHAPTER VIII.

BURKE'S LITTLE GAME.

THE fugitive displayed no weapon, yet Desmond felt sure that the hand, concealed within the folds of the dress, grasped one.

Boldly, though, the captain rode onward.

"Surrender!" he cried, as he got within range of fire, menacing the other with his revolver, as he spoke.

"Not to the likes of ye, me bould Burke of the Twelve Pins!" replied the unknown, and then, quick as a flash, up came the hand which had been concealed in the folds of the dress, and, sure enough, the hand grasped a revolver; immediately the stranger fired, anticipating Burke's shot.

A capital marksman, too, the unknown was, for the bullet sped straight to the spot for which it was destined—the heart of the good beast that Burke bestrode.

Down went the horse upon his knees. Over his head, so sudden was the shock, and so unexpected, went the captain, taking a regular "cropper."

Then the stricken steed rolled over on its side, dead, and Burke, stunned by the fall, lay senseless upon the turf.

A loud shout of rage went up on the air from the throats of the soldiers, riding at full speed along the cross-road; they commanded a view of the scene, and yet were not near enough to endanger the escape of the bold fugitive.

"Good-by to ye, ye, ye!" yelled the Unknown, at the top of his lungs. "I'll be afther seeing ye, ag'in whin I have more time!"

Then he wheeled his horse around and went off to the northward at racing speed, much to the disgust of the soldier squad, especially the little doctor, who had mounted behind one of the men, and who loudly lamented the loss of the beast which had cost him fifty pounds of good money.

"I tell you what it is!" proclaimed Smithers; "that fellow is a 'rasper,' a regular tearer, you know, and all that sort of thing! I shouldn't be in the least surprised if he was one of those Yankee Fenians, and be hanged to him!"

Pursuit evidently was useless, for there wasn't a horse in the command that was equal to the doctor's, and, even if there had been, the fugitive had so great a start that it was clearly impossible to catch him.

He was racing away at the horse's topmost speed, clearing the fences like a bird, and, as Smithers observed, riding like a "deuced jockey, you know;" so, taking advantage of a gap in the wall, a little distance on, the troop rode into the field, and went to the assistance of their down-fallen captain.

Burke was not seriously hurt, only stunned and shaken up by the fall, and he soon recovered from the shock.

"By Jove, old fellow!" the lieutenant exclaimed, as Burke sat up, "you hav'n't broke your neck, have you? No chance for promotion for me, this time."

"Curse the fellow!" cried Burke, vigorously, and in a tone that plainly showed he was worth a dozen dead men yet, "where is he?"

"Riding a steeple-chase with the Bloody Foreland as an objective point," Smithers replied.

The captain looked around him, and speedily discovered the fugitive fast vanishing in the distance.

"He has escaped, then?"

"Not the slightest doubt in regard to that," was the lieutenant's view of the case.

Burke rose slowly to his feet, and shook his clenched fist, savagely, after the horseman.

"It is Shamus O'Brien returned again to Ireland!" he exclaimed. "There is not the least doubt in my mind in regard to that, but I will have him! I will hunt him down if it takes every soldier in the district."

"Upon my word, Burke, if it is Shamus O'Brien, he is a mighty bold fellow!"

"Yes, he is taking a desperate risk, but it is like the man who put his head into the lion's mouth: some day the jaws will close and he will suffer. And now, boys, which one of you will give me a mount?"

One of the troopers at once slipped out of the saddle and tendered his steed to the captain.

Burke mounted and the soldier got up behind one of the other men; then the troop rode off, Burke and Smithers in the advance, where they could converse without being overheard by the rest.

"I tell you what it is, old fellow, you have had a deuced narrow escape!" said Smithers. "When I saw you take that 'cropper' over the head of your horse I felt sure that you would break your neck; in fact, I would have been quite willing to have bet two to one on it, you know. It was a deuced narrow escape; the fellow evidently intended to hit you."

"Oh, no, I don't think so. The shot was aimed at the horse, so as to check pursuit. If this is Shamus O'Brien, as I think, his appearance just at this time is extremely unlucky, for it interferes most materially with my plans."

"I don't exactly see how that can be."

"It is very easily explained, and as you take quite a friendly interest in my affairs, I don't mind making a clean breast of it, particularly as this reappearance of this fellow—if he is Shamus O'Brien—may make quite a difference to you."

The lieutenant looked puzzled. "But, you know, I don't see how that can be."

"I think that you hold my I. O. U. for about a hundred pounds."

"A hundred and ten pounds, my boy, exactly."

"Yes, I knew that it was somewhere about a hundred; I never trouble my head much about the odd figures;" and to do the master of Twelve Pins justice, it must be observed that he never troubled himself much about any figures, odd or even, so his creditors declared.

Smithers made a grimace.

He had come to Connemara, a stranger, and the dashing Desmond had "taken him in," not exactly in the Scriptural sense, but in a worldly one.

Now the Englishman was no fool, for all his eccentric ways, and he did not at all relish lending money with an almost absolute certainty of never seeing it again.

"Well, now, my dear Smithers," Burke continued, "the fact is, I am in a deuce of a hole. My family estates are so terribly incumbered that the revenue I receive from them may be easily represented by three small figures, and as I am, unfortunately, not of a saving turn of mind, my circumstances, instead of getting better, are continually getting worse. Timothy O'Glory, at whose mansion we are now quartered, thanks to his illigant better-half, who dearly loves a red-coat, is an old friend of my family and has always attended to all the legal business of our house. He is a lawyer, you know, a keen, cunning and forehanded man; but, cunning and close as O'Glory certainly is, your humble servant contrived to stick him."

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed Smithers. "I would not have believed such a thing possible."

"Well, as a general rule it would not have been, but he loaned me money under very peculiar circumstances. He is the guardian, you know, of Miss Maggie Moore, the heiress of Kilkerran, and for the last five years I have been an ardent suitor for that lady's hand. Both the lawyer and his wife favored my suit—old Timothy because he knew that if I became the lord and master of the heiress, I would not bother myself to look into his accounts too closely; and Mrs. O'Glory because she hates the O'Briens, and having got an idea into her head that there was a love-affair going on between the young heiress and this James O'Brien, she determined to do all in her power to separate the two. At one time after O'Brien was forced to fly the country on account of being mixed up in the Fenian business, it really looked as if I had a clear field before me. Miss Maggie condescended to receive my addresses, and I flattered myself that in a very short time I should be in possession of her sweet self and the Kilkerran estates, which, my dear Smithers, I admired fully as much as I did the lady. Under the influence of this rose-colored state of affairs old Timothy was fool enough to lend me five hundred pounds. That was just about a year ago, and by Jove, sir! no sooner had Timothy advanced the money when the heiress faced to the right about and began to exhibit a most decided aversion to yours truly. I was puzzled to account for it; O'Glory was more than puzzled—he was alarmed. If I did not succeed in getting the heiress, he knew that he would never stand any chance of getting his five hundred pounds. But now I am satisfied that I know what the matter is. O'Brien, I am convinced, returned to Ireland just about a year ago, and has been in concealment here ever since. Immediately after his return he continued to put himself in communication with the lady, and as his star ascended mine sunk."

"And you think this doughty female is O'Brien in disguise?"

"No doubt of it in my mind; the bold action is like the man, for he is a daring, desperate fellow. And now, my dear Smithers, you see the whole affair lies in a nutshell. I must marry the heiress; she will never consent until O'Brien is hunted out of the country, or else taken and consigned to the tender mercies of an English jail. Therefore I must leave no stone unturned to make Connemara too hot for my bold Shamus O'Brien, for if I don't, good-by to all hopes of my ever winning the heiress!"

"By George! quite exciting—quite like a romance, isn't it?" and Smithers undeniably enjoyed the situation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GOOSE-GIRL.

A SHORT half-mile from Ballinahinch on the road leading to the south was a small cluster of cabins, hardly enough of them to merit the title of hamlet, and yet the little settlement was known far and wide as Goosetown.

And good reason was there for the name since nearly all of the dwellers in the humble cabins got their living by raising geese.

The hamlet was right on the borders of a great bog, where the feathered bipeds found plenty of sustenance.

Goosetown had formerly belonged to one Michael Sheelan, of Inishboffin—a peculiar genius, reputed to be one of the greatest misers

that have been known. He lived alone in a small two-storied house, very much dilapidated and sadly needing repairs, a short distance from the hamlet. Old Michael was believed to be very wealthy, and he had neither kith nor kin in the wide world.

He lived in the old house with only a single servant—a middle-aged housekeeper to attend to his wants.

About two years before the time at which our story opens the housekeeper died quite suddenly, and after the funeral was over the miser astonished all the neighborhood by suddenly introducing a young snip of a girl, a stranger to all the folks around, in the housekeeper's place.

Naturally the appearance of the young girl produced a great deal of talk, and surmise, and suspicion.

And in fact so much scandal was excited by the appearance of the girl, who was both pretty and intelligent, that the parish priest, good Father Malone, at last thought it his duty to call upon the old man and speak to him in regard to the girl.

It was not a pleasant task, for the old fellow was little better than a heathen, and openly scoffed at all religion.

Father Malone, though, was of the stuff of which martyrs are made, and unflinchingly he performed what he regarded to be his duty.

The old miser flew in a passion at first, but the priest was undaunted and stuck to his text like a hero.

"It is a shame and a disgrace, so it is!" Father Malone declared, vehemently, "a man of your years to live here all alone wid that slip of a gurl"—a fine, rich brogue had the father. "It is a disgrace to the parish, and it is my dooty, do ye mind, to see it abated."

"Arrah now, hould your whist!" the old miser replied. "The gurl is me own flesh and blood, and since ye must have it, it's me darter she is!"

The priest gaped at the man in open-mouthed astonishment. Such a relationship had never occurred to him.

Sheelan told his story frankly. When he was a young man on a visit to Dublin he made the acquaintance of a dashing young woman; he had fallen over head and ears in love with her, and, as he was his own master, and the owner of a good bit of property, his suit was duly encouraged.

He married the girl; but a sorry step it was for him, as he soon discovered. His wife was an arrant jade, and if report spoke true no better than she ought to be. She had set herself out to catch the country gentleman, taking him to be a flat whom she could easily twist around her finger, but the man from Connemara was made of better stuff than to tamely endure this, and the consequence was that, after a year of cat-and-dog life, the madam disappeared one fine day, without even taking the trouble to say good-by to her lord and master.

Not that this annoyed Sheelan in the least, for, as he openly said, when condoled with in regard to his mishap:

"Faix! she kin go and welkim, for all I care!"

The baby-girl, which should have been a bond of union between the two, the heartless mother cruelly deserted, a fact which went far to prove how utterly worthless the jade was, for the woman who is deaf to the cries of her offspring ranks even below the beasts of the field.

Sheelan, as it happened, was all alone in the world—no living relative; and as his married life had all been spent in Dublin, it was no wonder that the news of his marriage had never reached his acquaintances in the wilds of Connemara.

The marriage, ill-starred as it was, made a miser and a recluse of Sheelan. Even as a young man he had always been noted for being close and calculating, and when he returned to his native wilds, which he did soon after this episode, he never breathed a word in regard to it to a single soul.

He had taken a dislike to the child on the mother's account; but he was man enough, miser and recluse as he was, to make suitable provision for her, although he did not wish the infant in his sight, if it was his own flesh and blood.

But, as years passed on the old sore gradually gave over rankling; and, finally, when the housekeeper died, Sheelan concluded that he might as well bring his child home—she was a fine girl now of eighteen—as to give harborage to a stranger.

This was the story that he told the priest, much to Father Malone's amazement, and he said, in conclusion:

"Plase the pigs, hereafter she'll stay wid me; and mind, father, what I have told you is in strict confidence, and I rely upon you as a gentleman and a priest not to say a word about her jade of a mother. No doubt that she died a long time ago in some ditch where such a trollop should die, and there's no need that the old sin should be thrown up in my girl's face, for she is as dacent a lass as iver knelt in a church."

Of course the priest assured Sheelan that he might rely upon him never to mention a word

of the matter to a living soul; and he further told the father that he would exert himself to look after the girl's welfare.

And this was the way that Kitty Sheelan came to live in Goosestown; and a most decided sensation the girl created, too, among the folks of the neighborhood, for she had been carefully educated in a convent, was as full of accomplishments as an egg is full of meat, and yet was as high-spirited and frolicsome a girl as Connemara ever had seen.

She and young Jim O'Brien had been great friends, and all the neighborhood thought for a time that there would surely be a match between the two, but it was only pure friendship, for, long before, the dashing young Irishman had given his heart to the beautiful heiress of Killkerran.

The gossips were undecided in regard to which girl would have been the richest catch for young O'Brien, for it was commonly believed that old Sheelan had "lashins" of money, and of course at his death Kitty would inherit all that he left.

There never was a miser in the world yet that his acquaintances didn't believe to be absolutely rolling in wealth.

The old man did die at last—die very suddenly, without being able to give any instructions in regard to his affairs.

O'Glory, who had a keen scent after a rich property, particularly if the heir was a young and unprotected girl, at once volunteered to see to Kitty's inheritance.

The miser had left a will, all duly drawn out by a Dublin lawyer and properly attested, and the gist of it was—to his daughter he bequeathed everything of which he died possessed. A man of course could do no more.

O'Glory, anticipating that there would be pickings in the management of the miser's estate, made himself as useful as possible to the girl. He attended to all the details of the funeral, and had the miser carried to his long home in royal style. "Spare no expense!" he had commanded, "and sind the bills in to me, d'ye mind! Don't be afther troublin' the poor, disconsolate gurl wid thim. I will attend to iverything—pay for iverything!"

And the lawyer was as good as his word. He settled every bill; invited the orphan to make her home at his house, a request which she gratefully declined, for she preferred to remain in the little old house which was her own.

And now comes the astonishing part of the affair. After due time O'Glory proceeded to look into the miser's affairs, but, to his utter amazement, he was not able to discover that Sheelan had left anything in the world, the little humble estate upon which he lived excepted. The miser's wealth had taken unto itself wings and flown away!

In rage and mortification, for he had expended a good hundred pounds in the affair, O'Glory sought the lawyer in Galway who had drawn up the will, and that legal light, although firm in his opinion that the miser was a man of property, was utterly unable to give any information in regard to it.

Never was there a man more enraged than the old lawyer. He couldn't even bring in a bill against the orphan for the money which he had expended so freely, for he had openly bragged in the loudest and loosest manner that it was a gift, and he would not take a penny of it back even if the Queen herself should offer it.

All this had been cunningly contrived to impress the supposed heiress with a belief that he was really and truly her friend.

The old lawyer was fairly caught, but he had no redress.

The income that Kitty received for the humble estate was not enough to support her; and so, with wonderful pluck, she set out to augment it.

She was not absolutely penniless, for, out of the pocket-money that her father had given her, she had saved nearly fifty pounds, and the best part of this money she invested in a flock of geese—a flock of enormous size. Of course, all the wise-heads predicted a most complete failure, but, on the contrary, the girl succeeded beyond all expectation, and she prospered so well in this strange calling that, far and near, she got the title of the Goose-girl.

By her own exertions she had made herself independent of the world!

Her success was a nine days' wonder, and the saying almost passed into a proverb in the neighborhood: "as lucky as Kitty Sheelan, the Goose-girl!"

CHAPTER X.

A LOVER'S CONFIDENCE.

AND now that we have told the story of the Goose-girl, no doubt the reader is anxious to become acquainted with her, personally.

Go we, then, to the humble mansion of the miser's daughter, for it really deserved the title of mansion, when compared to the other dwellings in the neighborhood, although only a modest two-story house, very much out of repair.

Within the house dwelt Kitty, and for attendants she had a withered-up old crone and her son, a shock-headed bumpkin, as honest as the

day is long, but as stupid a lout as could be found in all Galway.

The sun had just sunk to its rest behind the distant hills, and Kitty, leaning over the gate of the little garden attached to the house, was gazing anxiously up and down the road, as if she expected some one.

A good type of Irish beauty was the girl, with her blue-black hair, her eyes of azure, and pure Grecian face, over which a roguish look continually played. An extremely self-possessed, and rather willful young damsel was the Goose-girl.

The clatter of a horse's hoofs sounded on the road, and a bright look came over the face of the maid.

"It is he," she murmured; "my heart told me that he would come to-night."

The clatter grew louder, and then, around the turn of the road, up through the twilight, came a big white horse bearing a good-looking young man upon his back.

And as he came galloping onward, upon perceiving the girl, the rider murmured a sentence remarkably like the one which had come from the lips of the girl:

"There she is—I knew that she would be at the gate—my heart told me so!"

Of course, from these two exclamations, one would naturally infer that there was a little sweethearting going on between the two, and the surmise would not be far from the truth.

The rider was Tom Pepper, a lineal descendant of that famous family, the head of which, in the Boyne water time, recovered the family estates by the cute Irish trick—the story of which will live forever in Irish annals, and which is called the "White Horse of the Peppers."

True to the family tradition, Tom Pepper rode a white horse.

The young man lived only a few miles away, possessed quite a little property, and was studying for a lawyer.

Chance had thrown him in Kitty Sheelan's way, and he had at once fallen captive to the charms of the Goose-girl.

And although at first the girl had been inclined to look upon the matter as a joke, for since hard fortune had come to her, she had fully experienced how hollow-hearted are the friends of this world whom wealth alone attracts, yet in time she grew to believe that young Pepper was really sincere in the admiration which he professed, and as she liked him much better than any other young man who had ever paid her any attention, she listened to him, which was much more than she did to any of the rest, for she had a sharp tongue in her head, and she was not afraid to use it.

Pepper rode up to the gate, dismounted, fastened his steed, first greeting the girl, and then sauntered up to Kitty.

"A pleasant evening, Miss Sheelan," he said.

"Very," she answered. Kitty was keen of vision and she noticed that there was a cloud upon the young man's brow—a look upon his face which she had never seen there before, and it amazed her.

"Miss Sheelan, may I have a few minutes' earnest conversation with you?" he asked, in a very grave tone.

"Yes, if it pleases you," Kitty replied, with a dismal foreboding that there was trouble brewing.

"Miss Sheelan, have I not alway acted toward you like an honest man and a gentleman?" he demanded.

"In truth you have," she answered, surprised at this beginning.

"And, when I told you that I loved you, and that I would gladly make you my wife, despite your assurance that the world would laugh at me for a fool for so doing, you did not say me nay and bid me go away."

"Nor did I say yes, Tom Pepper, mind you that now!" she exclaimed, quickly.

"Kitty, I know very well that if you had not liked me you would have sent me to the right-about, in short order."

"Oh, you flatter yourself, Mr. Pepper!"

"No, I do not, Kitty. I was always honest with you; be you now honest with me."

"I will never be anything else, although I say it!" she replied, a flush upon her pretty face.

"Oh, I felt sure that you would be and that is the reason why I came right to you instead of raving like a jealous fool about the matter all over the neighborhood. I said to myself, Kitty will explain if I ask her; she will tell me the truth; and although it may be bitter for me to hear it yet I can bear it better from her than from any other human being."

"Faith! I don't know what you are talking about!" the girl cried, in astonishment.

"Kitty, I was in the village late last night, and for a practical joke some of the boys rode my horse home for me, so that I had to foot it. It was after midnight when I came past your house, and, like a love-sick fool, of course I stopped to take a glimpse of the old wooden casket that held my darling jewel. I stopped in the shade of the trees yonder and leaning up against one of the trunks was vainly cudgeling

my brains to compose a sonnet in your honor, when, to my amazement, at one of the upper windows of the house I distinctly saw a man's face. It was only for a moment, just as if he had come to the window for the purpose of looking out and seeing what kind of a night it was."

The girl laughed, but it was plain that her merriment was forced and unnatural.

"Oh, Tom, dear, you had been taking a sup."

"Not a drop, Kitty, stronger than whisky, as I'm a sinner!" the young man replied, gravely.

"And isn't whisky strong enough to muddle a man's head up and make him see double?" the Goose-girl asked, archly.

"Ah, allanna, but I didn't see two men—only one."

"Imagination, Tom, dear, or maybe it was Pat." This was the name of the hulking, loutish servant lad.

"Oh, whist now! It's trying to pull the wool over my eyes ye are now, Kitty, darlint!" young Pepper exclaimed. "Don't you think that I would know Pat at any time, drunk or sober? Sure! that red thatch of his would mark him anywhere, to say nothing of the mouth that is as big as a church-door and the nose as broad as my fist. It was not Pat that I saw; and now, Kitty, I come to you, fair and honest, and I say to you, who is this man who is apparently concealed in your house? If he is your lover, and you prefer him to me, say so and I'll thank you for your candor, say good-bye and never trouble you with my presence more."

The proud lip of the girl quivered for a moment and there was just a little angry sparkle in her eyes.

"Well, Mr. Thomas Pepper, you take it quietly enough!" she exclaimed. "And is that all that you care for me after all your protestations? You'll give me up at once and never try to win me from your rival."

"Now then, Miss Sheelan, you wrong me!" he replied, with becoming dignity. "I give you up because your action forces me so to do. If you have a man concealed in your house, and that man is my rival, he has already secured an advantage that, as a gentleman, I can never strive for. Look at the matter yourself, Kitty, and with other eyes than your own. Suppose some one besides myself had seen this man—this stranger in your house—what scandal it would cause unless he is your husband! Bear in mind, Kitty, I am not going to judge you hastily. I am going to give you a chance to explain."

"And if I refuse?" she asked, an angry spot of red appearing in each cheek.

"But you will not refuse to satisfy me in some way, or else you are not the girl I take you to be!" he rejoined.

"How can I do it? Suppose that there is a secret, and it is not mine to reveal?"

"Tell me so, then," Pepper replied, his face lighting up at once, for he thought he had hit upon the truth. "Say that this man is not your lover—maybe he is some good Irishman who has rubbed too roughly against the red-coat rule under which our country groans, and like a true daughter of Erin you are sheltering him from his enemies."

"And if I say to you that he is not my lover, without entering into further explanations, will that satisfy you?" she asked, a peculiar light stealing into her eyes as she comprehended the extent of the trust that her lover reposed in her.

"Certainly; I do not ask you to betray your secret."

"Well, then, he is not my lover!" the girl declared. "I have only one, and he is the truest heart that beats this day in Ireland."

"Which his name is Tom Pepper!" the young man added, laughing.

"And now that you have such faith in me I will impose another task upon you—a task which I cannot very well execute myself, and yet which I dare not trust to any one but you."

"I will undertake it and glad of the chance!" the young man exclaimed, instantly.

"It is a weighty one, for it carries the honor of a woman, but I do not fear to trust it to you, my own brave boy!" she cried, warmly.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAWYER AND THE CLERK.

TIMOTHY O'GLORY had been one of the most successful lawyers in Connemara, or in all Connaught, for the matter. When quite a young man he had succeeded his father, who had been a lawyer before him, and the son, being naturally very shrewd, and a hard worker, had built up a splendid business. Then, too, as his gains waxed apace he had not scrupled to turn his hand to money-lending; he had been one of the principal "gombeen" men of the district, as the usurers are termed who lend money at ruinous rates of interest to the unfortunate tenants who happen to be unlucky enough to fall behind.

And when once a farmer got into the clutch-

es of the gombeen men, in nine cases out of ten it meant utter ruin to him and the complete loss of all he possessed.

The gombeen man, like the wily spider, thrived upon the bodies of the unfortunate, silly farmer flies who were weak enough to be enticed into his meshes.

O'Glory was as hard as flint and as merciless as a grindstone. One foolish act only had he committed during his rise to affluence. He had married, and for once in his life the sharp lawyer had met his match.

He did not commit this act of folly until he was well along in years, and then he was urged to it by the hope of getting a big slice of property along with his bride, who was a spinster of uncertain years—an O'Neal, one of the great O'Neals of Galway, he supposed, and reputed to be worth fifty thousand pounds in her own right.

Before O'Glory made up his mind to slip his head into the matrimonial noose he took particular care to look into the particulars of Miss O'Neal's property, and, as far as he could discover, everything was all right and satisfactory.

Thinking, then, that he was getting a prize in Hymen's market, he espoused the ancient damsel; but, judge of the wily lawyer's disgust, after the honeymoon was over, when he came to look after his wife's property and made the discovery that she was literally as poor as a church mouse.

The O'Neal faction had laid a trap for O'Glory and had caught him in the cleverest manner, despite all his cunning.

The lawyer raved and swore; talked wildly of a divorce and vowed that he would make his better-half repent the trick which she had played, to the latest day of her life.

But, O'Glory had caught a Tartar. His wife could use her tongue far better than he, and being a tall, raw-boned female, almost big enough to make two of the shriveled-up lawyer, was fully able to take her own part; and then, too, she menaced the lawyer with the rage of her brother, the renowned, red-headed fighting O'Neal of Galway; so, awed by the prospect of a quarrel with this doughty fire-eater, the lawyer at last accepted the situation and resolved to make the best of it, for, as the old saying says, "what can't be cured, must be endured."

To the tender mercies of O'Glory and his virago of a wife, the young and pretty heiress had been intrusted when her father, old Patrick Moore of Killkerran shuffled off this mortal coil and went to repose with his ancestors in the churchyard.

The lawyer had retired from the active practice of his profession some time before, having given up his office in the town, but in reality he kept about as busy as usual, following his trade as a gombeen man with a great deal of perseverance.

A single clerk only the lawyer retained, one Mickey Feakle—a thin, sallow-faced man, with a parchment-like skin, and apparently as insensible to all ordinary feeling, as an Egyptian mummy resuscitated after a sleep of two thousand years.

Feakle had been as much a fixture of the town office as the big old desk at which he wrote. He had commenced with O'Glory, the father, as a lad and had grown up with O'Glory, the son, and if there was any one in this world in whom the lawyer did put some little trust it was the old clerk.

It was on the day following the one on which the remarkable events narrated in the opening chapters of our story had transpired, that we first introduce the reader to the O'Glory mansion.

Dinner had been dispatched and the company had dispersed. Besides the lawyer and his wife, the heiress and the confidential man of business, the household of the O'Glory mansion at present comprised the two officers—Captain Burke and Lieutenant Smithers.

When the troops had been ordered into the district on account of the rent troubles, Mrs. O'Glory had jumped at the chance to entertain the two officers. As Desmond Burke had remarked, the wife of the lawyer dearly loved a red-coat. Despite her historic maiden name, Mrs. O'Glory was a firm adherent of England, and had no words bitter enough for the bold souls who dreamed and hoped that some day the green isle would be free from the rule of the hated Saxon, and, in the words of the martyred Emmet, "take her place once again among the nations of the earth."

The old lawyer had just returned from town that morning, and the clerk, who was a keen observer, and well acquainted with all his master's peculiarities, at once perceived from O'Glory's manner that he had some weighty matter on his mind.

And so, nothing doubting that the lawyer would want to ask his counsel in the matter, after dinner was over Mickey watched his chance and sidled out into the garden, after O'Glory, when the latter excused himself to his guests.

Close to the left wing of the mansion grew a large oak-tree and under it a rustic garden seat was placed, O'Glory's favorite spot for a pipe

of fragrant tobacco, "that Injun weed," and a quiet meditation after dinner.

The lawyer was completely wrapped in meditation—a deep brown study in fact—when Feakle approached.

The clerk coughed discreetly, and O'Glory thus warned of his being at hand, looked up with a face that was perplexity itself.

"Hallo, Mickey, is it there ye are?" he exclaimed. "Faix! ye are the very man I want to see for it's bothered I am, entirely."

"And what has gone wrong, sur?" Feakle asked, seating himself by the side of the lawyer.

"Ye know the Goose-gurl!" said the old lawyer, plunging at once into the subject.

"Faith an' I do!" Mickey answered, decidedly; "as impident a hussy as iver walked on two legs."

Despite his age and extremely ugly appearance, Mr. Feakle prided himself upon being quite a ladies' man, and had made certain advances to pretty Kitty Sheelan which had been repulsed in the most contemptuous manner.

"Oh, she has a tongue in her head, bad luck to the saucy baggage! Well, Mickey, ye know that her father, ould Sheelan, whin he was alive was always thought to be rowling in gould."

"Of course; an' whin he died as poor as a empty purse it was a nine days' wonder."

"Mickey, ould Sheelan was not poor!" said the lawyer, impressively; "he was rich—as rich as a Jew! There's a big row of houses in Dublin that belongs to him, d'ye mind, and farms in Mayo, and an estate in Clare, and bank-stock and the devil knows what else!"

The clerk stared in open-mouthed wonder.

"Oh, it's the truth I'm spakin', Mickey—the truth as sure as I sit here this minute a living man!"

"But I don't understand—"

"And it is no wonder that you do not; it bangs Bannagher!" O'Glory exclaimed. "Ould Sheelan was a mighty quare customer. When he was in Dublin he played the foine gentleman, and his agents there never suspected that he lived up here in this out-of-the-way corner of the world. Whin he was not in Dublin they thought that he was abroad on the continent, or in London, maybe, wid the Queen, a-throwing away his gould by the handful and of course how could they know that he was living up here on a sixpence a day?"

"Faix! it was like ould Sheelan," Mickey remarked. "He never did anything like anybody else."

"Of course whin he died, the men in Dublin never heard sorra a word of it, but after a year had gone by, and they got no sign from him, they began to think that something was wrong and they put an advertisement in the newspapers. I saw it whin I was in Dublin, and at once I jumped to the conclusion that the Michael Sheelan that the Dublin lawyers wanted was our ould Mike Sheelan, of Ballinahinch. I made cautious inquiries, and to sum it all up in a few words, I discovered that this wild divil of a Goose-gurl, Kitty Sheelan, is the heir to an estate that is worth about fifty thousand pounds! What are ye afther thinking of that, Mister Mickey Feakle?"

"Bedad! it's hard to belave!"

"It's the truth, man, never-the-less, and, mind ye, this is a profound saycret. Divil a wan in all the wide worruld knows it but meself and you. Now thin, me idea is this. Kitty must place herself in me hands; I must attend to that fifty thousand pounds; but now the p'int is, how can I get hould of the gurl, for the baggage has no love for me. You see, Mickey, I joked wid her a bit wan day and she misunderstood me, and it is a hard name she has had for me iver since."

"Oh, aisy enough; I'll go to her and tell her that you have got wind of a man that owed her father a trifle of money and that you will undertake to get it for her, provided that she is willing to pay you for your trouble, and that if ye don't get it, you will not be afther charging her anything."

"That is it—that is it, exactly, Mickey!" the old lawyer exclaimed. "And bind her not to say a word about the matter. Tell her if she spakes the fat will all be in the fire!"

And so the plot was arranged, but the clerk had an idea in his head that he did not put in words, for the great inheritance of the girl dazzled him.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. O'GLORY.

AND while the interview between the old lawyer and his confidential clerk was taking place, as detailed in our last chapter, an almost equally important one was transpiring within the house.

Mrs. O'Glory had taken advantage of the absence of the gentlemen to attack the young heiress on behalf of Captain Desmond Burke, of Twelve Pins.

The wife of the lawyer was a lady well in years, tall and raw-boned in person, a regular virago in temper, illiterate and uncultivated; and yet affecting all the airs of a fine lady. A beautiful brogue, too, she had, although she was

vain enough to imagine that she had entirely got rid of that evidence of her birth, and nothing pleased her better than to have some wit of the neighborhood fool her to the top of her bent by inquiring how it was that she, an Irish lady, spoke like a native-born Englisher.

The two ladies were together in the drawing-room, an apartment that the madam had spared no expense to fit up in the most "illigant" style; but, as she had insisted upon having her own way about the furnishing, and had bullied the Dublin upholsterer like a duchess, the result was that the best room of the O'Glory mansion looked more like an auction shop than a parlor.

There was a big suit of ancient armor set up in one corner, which Mrs. O'Glory had bought cheap, at a second-hand shop, in London, and with an assurance worthy of a better cause she called every visitor's attention to it as being the identical suit of mail that her great-grandfather, Hugh O'Neal, of the Red Hand, had worn in days of yore, when he lorded it over half of Ireland. Some ancient chairs, too, were pointed out as belonging to this same doughty gentleman.

And all this too despite the fact—which her own common sense ought to have told her was no secret to her neighbors—that her father had been a small store-keeper in Galway, and that she could as easily trace back her line to Adam as to the great O'Neal.

Mrs. O'Glory sat in the great arm-chair, her especial pride next to the armor, the chair which she declared had once been the seat of judgment of the great Red Hand. In truth she had picked the relic up at a second-hand shop in Dublin for a five-pound note, and it was extremely dear for the money.

The heiress was by the window looking out into the garden.

"Maggie, dear, do ye see the captain?" Mrs. O'Glory asked.

"No, madam."

"And isn't he afther walkin' up and down, a-tryin' to catch a sight of ye through the windy, like the love-lorn gentleman that he is?"

The proud lip of the girl curled in contempt.

"I do not think, madam, that there is any danger of Captain Desmond Burke ever breaking his heart for any woman," she remarked.

"Oh, it's little ye know of him, me darlint!" Mrs. O'Glory exclaimed. "Shure! the captain is as tinder-hearted as a chicken, and he dotes on ye, me dear. I tell you phat it is, Maggie, ye don't know the value of the heart that ye are trifling wid. It's a foine compliment, too, to any gurl to be honored wid the addresses of a gentleman like Captain Burke. He comes of one of the ouldest families in the county—in all Ireland, for that matter. But of course you are not able to appreciate that, for you are not a descendant of one of the ould stocks as I am. I don't forget it, do ye mind, although I did demane myself by weddin' this snub of a lawyer." In this uncomplimentary manner she referred to her liege lord and master. "Now, take my advice, darlint, and secure the captain while you can. Shure! such a chance may never come to ye ag'in. He's young, foine-looking, a perfect gentleman, wid a good property and an ould name."

"Oh, madam, it is of no use to speak to me of Captain Burke!" the young girl retorted, impatiently.

"And why not?" Mrs. O'Glory demanded.

"Because I do not care for him, and I never shall."

"Oh, that is only a foolish, girlish fancy; ye'll change yer mind some time."

"Indeed I will not! I do not like the gentleman; his very presence is distasteful to me; nor do I like the uniform he wears. A red coat on the back of an Irishman is not agreeable to me."

"Oh, ye rebel!" cried Mrs. O'Glory, indignantly. "An' ye don't like the red coat! Oh, mother o' Moses! phat is it that ye do like? Mebbe ye would like a man that would be afther carrying a pike an' goin' ag'in' the Government, like that black villain O'Brien!"

"O'Brien is not a villain, but a worthy Irish gentleman!" the heiress exclaimed, spiritedly.

"Oho! an' that is the way the wind blows, is it?" the lawyer's wife exclaimed, with a sniff of angry contempt. "An' it is for the likes of this O'Brien that ye do be afther turnin' yer nose up at such a gentleman as Captain Desmond Burke. Shure! I thought that you had got rid of that nonsense a long time ago! It's true thin, I suppose, the report that is abroad. Shamus O'Brien is in the county hiding like a thafe from the officers of the law. But there's one consolation, me jewel, ye can't have him. Me husband is your guardian, and you can't marry without his consent, do ye mind that?"

"I shall soon be of age, and then I will be my own mistress," the young girl replied, much to the disgust of the scheming matchmaker.

Mrs. O'Glory set her thin lips spitefully together, and with a forced and scornful laugh attempted to conceal the vexation which she felt at this display of independence.

"Oho! it's a foine state of mind ye're in!" the angry woman declared. "I can guess what ye mane. It's thinking of that wild thafe of

the worruld, Shamus O'Brien, ye are! But, take my word for it, the day will come when ye will repent that ye ever gave thought to him. Isn't he an outlaw and a rebel? Bad 'cess to the likes of him, say I."

"It is no crime for a man to stand up in defense of his country!" the heiress returned, spiritedly. "Besides, I am convinced that he is innocent of the charge brought against him. There is no doubt that he loves Ireland, and would gladly shed his blood in defense of his native land, either in opposition to a foreign foe, or in a bold struggle for liberty against the oppressor who now tramples the green isle with an iron heel, but I am sure that he would not be foolhardy enough to excite a rising which could only end in bloody disaster. Many a time have I heard him say that it was utter madness for Ireland, situated as she now is, to attempt to cope with England in open, active warfare. Her wrongs must be redressed by peaceful means, in the halls of state, not upon the plains of war."

"What did he mane, thin, by nearly b'ating the Englishman to death, at Glingal?" Mrs. O'Glory demanded.

"It was a private quarrel—a dispute between man and man, such as might happen anywheres, and politics had nothing to do with it!" the heiress protested, the bright color flushing up into her face. "The English officer dared to speak disrespectfully of a lady; Mr. O'Brien resented the speech, not because the speaker was an Englishman, but because the remark was a foul falsehood. Words were succeeded by blows; the officer attacked Mr. O'Brien, and then, being worsted in the affray, drew his sword; this brave soldier, weapon in hand, attacked an unarmed man, but he was no match for the Irishman whom, in his blind rage, he had intended to slay. O'Brien wrested the sword from him, and then, with the flat of the blade, disdaining to use either point or edge, he flogged the rascal like a dog, and at last on his knees, fairly made him beg for mercy, and acknowledge that he had spoken falsely. O'Brien spared him, and then this cowardly hound reported to his superiors that O'Brien had attacked him at the head of an armed mob, so that this personal quarrel was magnified into an Irish outbreak, O'Brien was proscribed and a price set upon his head."

"Good reason for it, too!" Mrs. O'Glory declared, vehemently. "Shure! the government knew that Shamus O'Brien was a dangerous man, a traitor, always plottin' treason, bad luck to him!"

"But he never broke the law of the land, either by word or deed!" Miss Moore retorted. "He always kept within the bounds of reason. I know that these narrow-minded men who misrepresent England here in Ireland, looked upon him as an agitator who ought to be stopped, and so they gladly seized upon this quarrel as a pretext to exile the man they feared."

"It's mighty well informed, ye are!" the angry dame remarked, with profound sarcasm in her voice. "Mebbe it was the rebel himself told ye how it was?"

"He did," Maggie replied, quietly.

"Oh, mother of Moses, do ye hear that?" the old woman flamed out; "an' do ye dare to tell me to me face that ye have seen Jim O'Brien, an' ye know, too, that both Mr. O'Glory an' me-self are dead set ag'in' it?"

"I do not acknowledge that you have any right to control my actions so far as that goes!" the heiress replied, with quick decision.

"You know that he is not, an' never has been, welkin in this house!"

"You need not be alarmed, madam," Maggie observed, rising as she spoke, "he has never troubled your door, nor is he likely to."

"If he knows when he is well off, he won't!" the virago declared. "Faix! I'd give a trifle to see him laid by the heels, an' if he wance came into this house, it's mighty soon I'd send for the sodgers for to seize him; but it's a long lane that has no turning, an' I'm thinkin' that Mister Shamus O'Brien will thry to play the fox wance too often; an' it's a comfort to me to be afther thinking that the sodgers will lay hands on him, soon, an' thin he will be jailed for life, if he is not hung, as he ought to be, the red-handed blaggard!"

"I will not remain and listen to such words against a man who is as noble and as true a gentleman as ever breathed Irish air!" the heiress cried, indignantly. "If you cannot speak well of James O'Brien, you shall not speak ill of him in my presence!" And then she walked proudly from the room, leaving the lawyer's wife a prey to an outrageous fit of rage.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INFORMER.

THE dusky night had come, and Captain Desmond Burke, enjoying the fragrance of a fine cigar, was pacing up and down the lawn by the great gates that gave admittance to the grounds of O'Neal Hall.

The bold captain was not in a very pleasant mood, and even the excellent "weed" did not serve to tranquilize him.

Captain Burke had torn himself away from the festive group within the Hall, with the

odd Lieutenant Smithers was entertaining with some of the toughest stories of personal adventure that mortal ears ever had listened to, and had sought the solitude of the grounds without, not exactly to "weep his sad bosom empty," but to curse the evil luck which had attended his every venture lately, and to speculate upon the probabilities of said luck changing.

The moon, rising slowly, afforded light for the puzzled officer's promenade.

The first cigar finished, he flung it aside and lighted a fresh one, pacing up and down all the while like a caged lion.

"Luck must change, some time," he muttered; "it must change; the tide cannot always run counter. The appearance of this O'Brien, though, presages no good to me, for that this fellow who so cleverly eluded us to-day was O'Brien, I have no doubt. And if it is O'Brien, the chances are a hundred to one that he has been in communication with the girl. If so, that accounts for the coolness with which she has treated me lately. Satan take the luck, say I!" he exclaimed, bitterly; "to think that I, Desmond Burke, one of the old Burkes of Twelve Pins, should be on the brink of ruin and no chance of salvation open except the one that comes through this girl! And yet, the little minx appears as cool and indifferent to my suit as though I were almost an utter stranger, instead of being an attentive and ardent suitor, for the last two years. Deuce take her! If it wasn't for the money, little chance would she ever have of becoming Mrs. Burke. Matters must reach a climax pretty soon; I cannot put my creditors off much longer, and when the crash does come, it will be an 'illigant' one. I think, though, that a gentleman of my name will be missing about that time. But I musn't think of that!" he added, abruptly. "I must not show the white feather, yet awhile. The appearance of Shamus O'Brien, if it really is Shamus, instead of being a stroke of ill-luck may be the turning point of my fortunes. He comes here, of course, after Maggie Moore. Only a woman could induce a man to risk the yawning doors of a jail. If it had not been for her, he surely would not have ventured back to Ireland. Now, then, suppose that I succeed in taking him? Once my prisoner, how do we stand? I shall not be in a hurry to turn him over to the authorities, but rather place him in some secure confinement. I hold him fast. I can either turn him over to the government, or else be so careless in my watch over him that he manages to escape. The first point, now, is to put salt on the tail of my bird; then, when Mr. O'Brien is in my power, say to my darling Miss Moore—'Your lover's fate is in my hands; is his life worth ten thousand pounds to you? If it is, arrange it so that I can get the money, and I will go bail that he shall get out of the hobble.'"

Then the captain paced in silence up and down for a few minutes and pulled away lustily at the cigar.

"Upon my word and honor!" he exclaimed at last; "I protest that it is an extremely fine plan, and if I succeed in the first part I can hardly fail in the last. But now, in regard to the first part—how on earth am I going to put my ten fingers on Mister Shamus O'Brien, if you please?"

Some sage has written that no matter how strange and unexpected the situation, some man always rises out of obscurity to meet it.

And now through the dusk of the night crept a dark form—a man who believed that he could answer the question the captain had just asked, although, of course, he did not overhear it, and had no idea that it had been put.

The man was the process-server, Dooney MacDarrow, who had been so roughly handled by the disguised stranger.

Dooney came limping along, sick and sore in every limb, and no wonder, for he had received a terrible drubbing, and a stout blackthorn stick is not quite as soft as a eider-down.

"Is it there ye air, captain darlin'?" the process-server exclaimed, as he came limping up to the gate.

"Hallo, Dooney, is that you? I expected that you would be laid up for a week."

"Shure! there is no ointment for sore bones like revenge on the man that gave the hurt, sur," Dooney replied, with a ferocious air.

"Oho! and that is the tack that you are on, eh?" Burke exclaimed, with a great deal of satisfaction apparent in his manner. The fellow had come as though summoned by his thoughts.

"Yis, sur; do ye think that I could be after laying in me bed, a-nursin' my bruises, and this fellow to the fore galavanting round the county, bold as brass?" the process-server demanded, with a great deal of savageness in his tones. "Well, if I was in your place, I confess I don't think that I should keep my bed if I was able to get up. I should be much more disposed to seek for satisfaction than to cry quits with the fellow."

"True for ye, yer honor; and I've bin afther him, the Curse of Cromwell on him, the heavy-handed thafe of the world!"

"Aha! you have been after him, eh?" Burke was all attention now.

"Like a bloodhound, yer honor."

"And what luck?"

"I've thracked him—I've thracked him like a fox to his hole!" Dooney answered, his little eyes gleaming and his whole face lit up with an expression of savage joy.

The face of Burke became radiant also, for he put full faith in the declaration of the process-server, knowing the man so well. Dooney was a shrewd, cunning rascal, and one not easily outwitted.

"That is good, sir, and now I suppose the next thing is you want me to lay him by the heels."

"Yis, yer honor; and I thought that, seeing how much yer honor was affected by the blaggard, that mebbe ye would be willing to stand a trifle for me trouble," and Dooney leered significantly at the officer.

It was no secret in the neighborhood that the Bould Boy of Glingal, as Shamus O'Brien was generally called, was a most dangerous rival to Captain Desmond Burke for the hand of pretty Maggie Moore.

"You are a cunning rascal, Dooney; I see that you intend to combine business with pleasure!" Burke protested. "You want me to pay you for your information and at the same time execute your vengeance upon the man who thrashed you within an inch of your life."

"And isn't that right, yer honor?" Dooney demanded, with another leer. "Shure! it's not wrong to turn an honest penny whin ye can."

"Oh, that is all right. I don't object. Give me information so that I can secure the person of James O'Brien and you shall have five pounds."

"Dead or alive!" the process-server cried, with a malignant grin upon his ugly features.

"No, no!" the captain exclaimed; "not dead! I wouldn't give you five pence for James O'Brien dead."

Dooney looked amazed.

"Oh, I mean it, man!" Burke hastened to say. "O'Brien is of no value to me dead. It is alive I want him. So mind; alive he will be worth to you five pounds; dead, nothing."

"Faix! yer honor, he's a desperate man and mebbe it won't be easy to take him alive."

"We must surprise him with such a force as to make resistance useless," the captain answered.

"That will do, mebbe; but, captain dear, ye must have plenty of min, for this same Shamus O'Brien is a tearer."

"I will look out for that; but now, where is he to be found?"

"Begob, captain, you would never guess in a hundred years!"

"Well, sir, I am not anxious to guess!" Burke retorted, impatiently.

"Oh, it is marvelous! Shure! the cutest wouldn't come at it in a thousand times!"

"You are wasting precious moments; come to the point at once!"

"I have bin on the watch for him for some time—in fact, iver since I got wind that Shamus O'Brien was in the country. I had a small taste of a suspicion as to where he would be after hidin'; and, sure enough, I tracked me bould bucker to earth. He has been consaled, sur, in the house of the Goose-girl."

"Oho, then, it is in Kitty Sheelan's cottage we must look for him?"

"No, sur, you're not warm yit; it's nearer home than that."

"What do you mean?"

"I mane that, at nine to-night, he will be here; it's an appointment he has wid Miss Maggie Moore, d'ye mind! He has bin consaled in Kitty Sheelan's cottage, but he got wind, I'm thinkin', that he was being tracked, so he fled to the hill, but I kept close watch on the house, for I thought that sooner or later I would get a clew to where he was, and so I did this very night, for as I lay consaled near by I heard Kitty sind Tom Pepper to bring me bould marauder to O'Neal Hall at nine to-night to see Miss Maggie Moore."

The captain was most decidedly astonished, and yet the bold act was like the man.

"At nine to-night, eh?" he repeated. "Well, the chances are that there will be more persons present at that meeting than either Maggie or Shamus O'Brien expect."

CHAPTER XIV.

WALKING INTO THE TRAP.

O'NEAL HALL was an old, rambling building, constructed after the usual fashion of all the houses that date back to ancient times; first, there was the main, square house, built as much for defense as shelter; then wings, all constructed at different times, as the caprices or the income of the various owners suggested.

One not well acquainted with the old house could easily become bewildered in the many devious, winding passageways.

The young heiress was housed as befitted her station, for Mrs. O'Glory, like all persons of her class, who manage by hook or by crook to rise from nothing to something, was a great stickler for the proprieties of life.

As one of the richest heiresses in the county, then, Miss Moore had an entire wing of O'Neal Hall set apart for her special benefit—not that

she had the least bit of use for the six spacious rooms which Mrs. O'Glory, with a great flourish, informed her had been prepared for her accommodation when she became a member of the lawyer's household, after her father's death. Maggie was extremely simple in her habits, and as quiet and unassuming as though she was only a maid of humble degree, instead of being the heiress of old Patrick Moore, of Killkerran. A single maid sufficed to attend her, and she really shrunk from all display.

The wing of the hall which the heiress occupied faced the deer-park. There were three rooms on the lower floor, and three above. A private door led into the park, so that it was the easiest thing in the world for the heiress to arrange an interview with any one, without running any risk of discovery, if she chose so to do.

Nine o' the night was near at hand.

Desmond Burke, having been duly warned by the informer, as related in our last chapter, had made all needful preparations to give Miss Maggie Moore's nocturnal visitor a most complete surprise.

The captain had come to the conclusion that he was most decidedly in luck, and that that night was destined to be the turning point in his fortunes. His pursuit of the heiress had, so far, been a most fruitless one; but, with the "rebel," bold Shamus O'Brien, in his power, terms might be made.

Burke had revealed the whole matter to the lawyer and his wife, and the mingled rage and astonishment of the pair were most amusing.

"The huzzy! To so far forget her position and the respect due to the roof that shelters her!" Mrs. O'Glory exclaimed, in fierce anger.

"We'll be afther laying me bold lark by the heels, anyhow!" the lawyer had consoled himself.

The first burst of astonishment over, the captain unfolded his plan to the two, and both of them immediately approved of it.

"Faith! captain, dear, it is a foine head ye have!" Mrs. O'Glory remarked, admiringly.

The lawyer was equally complimentary.

Both of them fully entered into Burke's personal plans, too; the money was the main thing, after all, and not the lady. If she was willing to buy O'Brien's release at a good round sum, the captain would be stupid to refuse to accept the ransom.

The trap was cunningly prepared. The captain and Lieutenant Smithers, to whom Burke had confided the secret, lay in wait, concealed in the park without; the old lawyer, his wife and Mickey Feakle, the clerk, hid themselves in a closet in the passageway leading from the private door to the heiress's apartments; so, even if after O'Brien's entrance, he took the precaution to fasten the door behind him—which was not likely, as he would be pretty certain to leave it open so as to escape freely in case of an alarm—they could open it and give admittance to the watchers without.

All who had been admitted into the secret could be trusted to keep it, if everything worked as the plotters expected, and Maggie Moore, with her gold, bought the freedom of the hunted and proscribed outlaw, James O'Brien.

All the men had armed themselves to the teeth. O'Brien was known to be a desperate fellow, and unless it was made plain to him at once that he was at the mercy of the trap-springers, he would be pretty certain to make a desperate resistance.

But, four to one—coupled, too, with the advantage of the surprise, was certainly odds enough even to daunt the heart of as bold a fellow as Shamus had proved himself to be.

Lying flat upon the soft turf, concealed behind the trunk of a giant oak, the captain and Smithers kept diligent watch.

Each one grasped a revolver in his hand; they were prepared to take "Mister" O'Brien so completely by surprise that the outlaw would think discretion the better part of valor and yield on the instant.

"It must be near the time," Burke muttered, his ears keenly on the alert to catch the slightest noise.

"Fast it, my dear captain!" Smithers asserted. "I am positive of it—I would bet five pounds on it. Perhaps he won't come—may have got wind of your little game—naturally suspicious, you know, like an old rat—laughs at all kinds of traps, by George!"

"He will come!" the captain exclaimed, confidently. "The light that burns yonder in the window is placed there as a signal for him."

And, sure enough, in one of the upper rooms of the wing, a waxen candle, placed upon the broad window seat, sent its flame out into the inky darkness of the night.

"Yas, it looks like it."

"As long as that light burns there it signifies that the coast is clear."

"A beacon of safety to light the storm-tossed mariner into a secure harbor, eh? But in this case, thanks to your deuced cunning, it's a false light and will wreck the ship of fortune of our bold Irish friend if he is unwise enough to steer by it."

"Hush!" exclaimed Burke, abruptly, his ear close to the ground, "I hear footsteps."

"By Jove! you are right!" added the lieutenant, after a moment's pause.

"And there is more than one."

"I say, suppose that he has brought three or four of these wild Irishmen with him?" suggested Smithers, after the somewhat alarming discovery was made that the new-comer was not alone.

"It is a woman!"

Smithers stared, but after listening for a moment he saw that his companion was right; the rustle of a petticoat could plainly be distinguished.

"What the deuce does this mean, you know?" he demanded, perplexed.

But, Burke was quick to solve the riddle.

"It is the Goose-girl, of course! She comes as a guide, and, probably, to keep watch outside so as to prevent a surprise."

"That will rather interfere with our plans, eh?"

"Yes; but we must contrive in some way to surprise her. I fancy that if we can creep up to her, and suddenly place the cold muzzle of a revolver on her forehead, she will not be apt to be so vigilant a sentinel as might be."

"By Jove! I should say not, unless it frightens the girl into hysterics, and then she will be apt to scream at the top of her lungs."

"We must risk it; there is no other course," Burke averred.

The near approach of the footfalls at this point put a stop to the low conversation.

Through the darkness of the night came two forms, stealing onward with careful, cautious tread.

Despite the thickness of the gloom the watchers were able to distinguish the figures, although not to recognize the persons.

One was a woman, and the other, following close behind, a man.

They proceeded straight to the private door and entered, and the two in ambush plainly heard the sound of the door cautiously closed after them.

"The woman is going to stand sentry inside, if that is the little game!" Smithers announced, in astonishment.

"Yes, and I am afraid that it will upset our plans," Burke replied, rising to his feet as he spoke—an action which the lieutenant imitated.

"Old O'Glory may have sense enough to take the bull by the horns and rise superior to the situation," Smithers suggested.

"He may, but I fear not; but we had better close in. Inside of five minutes we will know whether the trick to-night is to fall to me or to James O'Brien."

The two advanced rapidly, but with due caution, to the private door.

Just as they reached it the door was opened in their faces and the old lawyer appeared.

"Whist! we have him, the murderin' blaggard!" O'Glory whispered. "He's gone upstairs—he's wid the gurl now. Be me sowl, captain, ye ought to bate him black and blue."

"And the girl—the girl that came with him?"

"It's the Goose-gurl, of coorse!" the lawyer exclaimed. "I recognized her voice, for she spoke as she passed through the hall. She said—the baggage! that there was not the laste danger."

"I am afraid that she will find before she is many minutes older she is not so true a prophet as she thinks," Burke returned. "But now let us advance at once; the quicker the surprise the better."

"Not the laste taste of a lie in that! Go ahead, captain!" O'Glory assented.

Up the stairs the party went. First came Burke, Smithers at his heels, then O'Glory and his clerk, and, last of all, Mrs. O'Glory.

Although afflicted with a mortal fear of firearms, yet the spouse of the lawyer could not restrain her curiosity nor abstain from a scene which might have a tragic ending.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DISCOVERY.

ALL of the men were provided with revolvers with the exception of Mickey Feakle, and no persuasion could induce him to trust himself with one of "them new-fangled pistols," as he expressed it. He declared that he was much more likely to damage himself than the outlaw if he attempted to use one, and so fell back on the weapon most natural to his race, a "nate blackthorn twig."

The door of the heiress's apartments was reached and the "army" halted for a moment, just the pause before the spring—the fatal spring, the results of which would give Shamus O'Brien to the tender mercies of an English jail.

Sounds of conversation came plainly from the room within; it was clearly evident that the destined victims had not the slightest apprehension of danger.

"Now then for it!" commanded the captain, and with the word he turned the handle of the door, and swinging it rudely open entered the room within, followed closely by the rest.

The occupants of the room were, of course, completely astonished at the unexpected inter-

ruption, but not more so than were the intruders by the scene which met their eyes.

In the center of the room, in a large easy-chair, sat the heiress, Maggie Moore, and upon her lap was a beautiful babe, an infant some six months old!

By the side of the chair knelt the Goose-girl with extended arms, playing with the chubby infant; a large covered-basket near by, revealed how the babe had been conveyed into the house, and in the background stood Tom Pepper, an amused expression upon his face.

The sudden appearance of the armed and evidently hostile force produced a startling impression.

Pepper stared in amazement, astonished but not alarmed.

The Goose-girl jumped to her feet, while the heiress clutched the babe in her lap as though she feared that danger threatened it. But, the man whom the intruders expected to see, the bold Irishman, Shamus O'Brien, was—to use the old expression—conspicuous by his absence.

Carefully as the snare had been planned and sprung, it had not caught the rebel.

Mr. O'Brien was not to the fore.

Mrs. O'Glory was the first to recover the use of her voice.

"Oho! Do me eyes desave me?" she screeched; "is it a child that I see? Oh, Maggie Moore, phat does this mane, if you please?"

A deep crimson flush quickly covered the beautiful face of the heiress; she was terribly confused—answered not—only hugged the child tighter to her breast.

It was a painful situation, for it was plain to all that they had by accident stumbled upon a secret that no one had suspected.

Maggie Moore, the heiress of Kilkerran, was a mother!

But, the father of the child—who was he? and was the infant born, the rightful heir to some good name, or was it a waif and stray with only a heritage of shame?

"Maggie Moore, I wouldn't have belaved it of ye if wid me own two lookin' eyes I had not seen it!" the old lawyer protested.

"You unfortunate girl, to disgrace your family in this way! and to disgrace us, too! The Lord be wid you and save you, for you need it sadly!" Mrs. O'Glory cried, in righteous indignation.

"And, what on earth is all this row about?" the Goose-girl asked, tartly. "And, what do you all mean by rushing into the room this way and with pistols in your hands, too?" Smithers incontinently pocketed his immediately. "Why, I never heard of such a thing in all my life. Are you all crazy?"

"Silence, girl! How dare you spake in this way in the presence of your betters?" the lawyer's wife cried, with an angry frown, but the Goose-girl was not at all abashed, and returned the frown with interest.

"My betters!" she answered, with a scornful laugh. "I'll have you to know, Madam O'Glory, that my betters are not easily found; they're not in this room, that's true!"

"This is really disgraceful!" Mrs. O'Glory spluttered, for a wonder at a loss for words, the audacity of the girl astounded her. "Timothy, be afther putting that saucy baggage out!"

"You need not trouble yourselves to put me out!" Kitty retorted. "I am able to walk, and I will go out of my own accord when I get ready, and I did not come here to see any of ye, either. It is Miss Moore that I am visiting."

The old lawyer was in a sad dilemma. He had the best of reasons for wishing to keep on good terms with the girl, for the large fortune to which she was the undoubted heir was uppermost in his mind, but as she was evidently the ally of his ward in this bold defiance of his wishes, it was necessary for him to rebuke her, but he wanted to do it as gently as possible, so as not to give mortal offense to the girl.

"Truth! and it is meself that is astonished at you, Kitty Sheelan!" he remarked, with a wise and sorrowful shake of the head.

"Oh, don't be afther troubling yourself about me!" the girl retorted, with a toss of the head. "Look to home and you will find plenty to do."

"You saucy jade!" yelled Mrs. O'Glory, in a rage; "you ugly little trollop! For two pins I would box your ears till it made your head ring. And you, Maggie Moore, hav'n't you the least bit of shame? Hav'n't you a word to say for yerself? Oh, saints in heaven be praised, that your old father isn't alive this day to see yer shame! It would be sure to kill the ould man."

"It's idle to waste words now, afther the mischief is done," the old lawyer observed, with a bitter accent. In truth he was terribly mortified by the discovery that had been made, and the more so that Captain Burke was a part of the scene. Of course this would put a stop to Burke's suit, and if the captain did not wed the heiress or in some way get hold of her money, where on earth was he to raise the funds to settle his debts? "It is only a waste of breath to talk now," the lawyer continued. "But one thing I will ask you for my own satisfaction, not that it will do the least taste of good, but

for my own satisfaction: Maggie Moore, whose child is this?"

"Mine!" responded the Goose-girl, promptly, stepping forward and taking the infant out of the arms of the heiress, and then holding it caressingly against her breast. "It is my child and I would like to know what any of you have got say about it, either?"

If a bomb-shell had suddenly descended into the room and exploded in the midst of the company, it could not have produced more astonishment than this bold declaration.

"Your child, Goose-girl!" Mrs. O'Glory demanded, shrilly, the first to find her voice.

"Your child, Kitty Sheelan!" the lawyer cried, doubtfully.

And as for Burke and Smithers, they merely looked on and smiled; they believed that they understood the clever device of the girl. She had sacrificed her own good name to save her friend, for the two girls were firm friends despite the difference in their stations.

It was a most striking tableau, and pen can hardly do justice to the subject.

The face of the heiress had lighted up at the prospect of escape opened before her, but O'Glory was enraged at the deception which was attempted to be practiced upon him, and, lawyer-like, he proceeded to cross-examine the girl.

"Your child, aha?" he cried, with a scornful sniff of contempt. "That is a foine story, Kitty Sheelan; but men are not quite such fools as you take us to be. Now answer me this question if you can: If this is your child, who is its father?"

A dead silence followed the abruptly put question, and every eye in the room was fixed upon the Goose-girl.

For a moment she hesitated to reply; the lawyer began to chuckle in his sleeve; at the first cast he had bagged his fish.

But, when in this world from the days of Adam downward did man's wit surpass woman's!

"Who's its father!" repeated Kitty. "That is what you want to know is it?"

"Yes, and I'm afther thinking that it will trouble you to answer!" the lawyer observed, maliciously.

"Oh, no, not at all. In the first place you have no business to ask. I am no ward of yours, and you have no call to meddle in my affairs at all, but, since you are so curious, I don't mind letting you know this once. This is my child, and there stands its father!" and she pointed to the young man who had come with her. "Tom, you villain, come forward and own your child!"

Pepper advanced with a grin upon his good-natured, handsome-looking face.

The plotters looked disgusted; this was a move on the part of the girl which they had not expected.

"Aha, Mister Tom Pepper, this is your child, is it?" the old lawyer demanded, angrily.

"Yes, sir, although Kitty and I intended to keep our marriage secret, for there are family reasons that impel us to such a course; but that is nothing to you."

"Oh, you are carrying it on with a bould hand!" O'Glory cried, in a rage. "Your child, eh?"

"Yes, sir, my son and heir!"

"Oh, bad luck to you, Tom! Don't fool the gentleman; you know that it is a girl!" Kitty rejoined, independently.

Pepper made a grimace.

"Kitty, what do you want to expose me for?" he demanded, with a laughable assumption of anger. "Isn't it the correct thing for the first-born of an Irish gentleman to be a son? Bedad, I'll name her Thomas, anyhow."

The game was up; the attempt had failed, and nothing remained for the plotters but to retreat as gracefully as possible.

The shrewd wits of the girl had over-reached them, so there was nothing to be done but to watch and wait.

The first danger had been boldly met and bravely turned aside, but active foes were at work, foes who were not discouraged by a single repulse.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DESPERATE MAN.

As Captain Burke observed in the most placid manner to Smithers as they paced slowly away from the scene of their late discomfiture: "The first trick is hers, but one trick don't make a game."

"Deuced well played, though, my dear fellow," Smithers asserted, "and as for that little Goose-girl, as they call her, she is really a genius. I feel a most decided admiration for that charming creature, and I shall have to cultivate her acquaintance."

Burke looked astonished at this declaration, but he was so well used to the strange whims of the eccentric Englishman, that he did not comment upon the observation.

Already the quick brains of the recreant Irishman had conceived a plan whereby he hoped to entangle the prey he sought in the

meshes of a web from whence escape was impossible.

In anticipation of the possibility that O'Brien might not yield peaceably, Burke had had a squad of soldiers in readiness to come forward upon signal, and with the soldiers the informer, Dooney MacDarrow, the process-server, lingered. He did not share in the captain's belief that O'Brien would tamely yield. On the contrary, he was sure that the "rebel" would offer a most desperate resistance, and he fairly burned to get a chance at him so as to be able, in some slight measure, to revenge himself for the terrible beating he had received from the outlaw when masquerading in woman's attire.

Burke sought Dooney out at once, and, after dispatching the soldiers to their quarters, made known to the informer all that had occurred, for he had a great opinion of the low cunning of the ill-used Dooney, particularly when he was urged forward by an eager desire for vengeance, as was the case at present.

MacDarrow at once scouted the idea that the child belonged to the Goose-girl.

"Shure! there has bin a love affair betune Tom Pepper and Kitty Sheelan for some time, but no marriage; I'm sartin of that. The child's Maggie Moore's, ye kin bet yer head on it, sur, and the father is James O'Brien. It's as plain as a pike-staff to me. They were married jist afore he had to fly the country, and they kept the marriages a secret so that the old lawyer wouldn't be able to kick up any row. The child has bin out to nurse, somewhere, and the Goose-girl got Tom Pepper to go afther it, and that is where I was desaved, for from the little I heard I thought that it was Shamus who was coming to-night."

The explanation was reasonable, and Burke was inclined to accept it; so the two set their wits to work to devise a second scheme to entrap O'Brien, since the first one had failed so completely.

With two such brains acting in concert, it was not long before they succeeded, and when they separated Dooney at once hurried away to commence operations, for the captain was a firm believer in the old adage of striking while the iron was hot.

Eight-and-forty hours passed away before the captain made a move; but at the end of that time he surprised Miss Kitty Sheelan in a particularly disagreeable manner, by walking into her cottage one evening. He had knocked at the door; she had opened it and he had at once advanced into the room.

Kitty was all alone, for the old woman and boy, who lived with her, had gone off to attend a wake in the village.

The girl had recoiled as the captain advanced, more in astonishment, though, than terror, for she was a very stout-hearted little woman.

"Good-evening, Miss Sheelan," Burke accosted, in the politest manner, removing his hat and bowing as gracefully as though he was addressing the greatest lady in the land; but the girl was not in the least deceived; she knew that Burke was her bitter, deadly enemy on account of the part which she had taken in befriending the young heiress, and that a visit from him meant mischief.

"Good-evening, sir," she replied, striving to appear as composed as possible, for not for the world would she have betrayed the alarm that she really felt.

"I trust that I find you in perfect health this evening, and I also trust that you will excuse the liberty that I have taken in calling upon you," he observed, in the softest of voices.

"Certainly, sir."

"The fact is I had a little business in regard to which I wished to see you, and as I heard that you were likely to be alone to-night I thought that it would be a favorable opportunity to see you, as our interview would not be likely to be interrupted."

Not a trace of anger, not a sign of hostility in the voice of the speaker, but the girl understood well enough what he meant. She was all alone in the house; the rest of the inmates were absent; the cottage was in a lonely situation—no other habitation near it; no assistance within call. He knew that she was alone and unprotected, and he took good care to let her know that he was acquainted with the fact.

Not the least doubt in her mind that he had come on a hostile mission, and yet she could hardly bring herself to believe that Captain Desmond Burke, of Twelve Pins, could so far forget his station as to threaten a woman.

But, desperate men do desperate things, and the captain was most truly a desperate man.

"Yes, sir, I am all alone," she confessed.

"I knew it or I should not have come," he replied, significantly. "I have something very important to say to you, and I do not wish our interview to be interrupted; and now, to come at once to the point—that was a very pretty trick you played upon us, the other night."

"A trick!" and the blue eyes of the girl opened wide in wonder.

"Yes, a trick!" he repeated, firmly. "Oh, don't flatter yourself that you deceived me, or any one of us, for that matter. We all know well enough that the child is the child of Maggie

Moore, and in order to screen her you declared yourself the mother of the child. Tom Pepper, too, your lover, aided you in the deception, although he had taken so much interest in his offspring as to have forgotten the sex."

"Sure, I would be willing to take oath, that it was truth I was sp'aking!" Kitty declared, stoutly.

"You would be willing to take an oath, but to declare your willingness and to take the oath are two entirely different things," Burke reminded her. He had guessed the quibble a once.

"Try me!" the girl exclaimed.

"That is exactly what I am going to do," the captain responded, and, to the girl's consternation, he drew a small Bible from his pocket. "Now, Miss Kitty Sheelan, or Mistress Tom Pepper, whichever you may be, have the kindness to kiss this book and so make oath to the truth of what you have stated, and—no Irish trick about it, either—no kissing your thumb instead of the book, so as to evade the oath. You see I am up to all the games, for I am Irish born myself. Come, take the oath, if you dare!"

The girl was fairly cornered, but with the ready wit so natural to the Irish peasant, she managed to find a way to creep out.

"Troth! I will not take the oath to please you!" she declared, with a toss of the head.

"Since you will not believe my word, I don't see why I should bother my head about the matter at all. You can believe or disbelieve just as you please, I'm sure I don't care."

The captain pocketed the book again with the utmost sang froid.

"That is an extremely neat way of getting out of it," he remarked. "But, it don't better your position in the least. I know, now, that what I only suspected before is true. You are not the mother of the child, and Maggie Moore is."

"If it please you to believe that way, do," she replied, carelessly. "Shure, I don't care what you believe."

"I haven't the least doubt of that: but now, Miss Sheelan, I want a little information from you."

"You will not get any, sir; so you had better begone."

"Allow me to be the best judge of that, please," Burke answered, with icy politeness.

"Depart, sir! I have nothing more to say to you."

"Ah, there you see is where the difference is between us; I have a great deal to say to you."

"It's mighty little satisfaction you'll get!" Kitty cried, tartly. The captain's manner was enough to annoy an angel, and the Goose-girl, although a very charming maid, was not yet fitted for wings and a residence in the realms above.

"We will be able to decide better about that when the interview is ended," Burke retorted. "Permit me to remind you that you are all alone in the house and utterly in my power. No cry that you can utter will be heard by human ears. You have chosen to intrude yourself in this matter and you must accept the consequences. I am determined to force the truth out of you even if I have to forget that you are a woman, and use violence."

Kitty started back in horror. There was no mistaking the man's meaning; he was in dead earnest, and meant every word that he said.

He had spoken truly, too; she was alone, and that hour of the night, for it was near ten, any cries that she might utter would not be apt to bring assistance, for the road was a lonely one and little traveled even in the daytime.

"Oh, sir, you are joking—I know you are!" she cried; "a gentleman like you would not be after harming a poor lowly girl like myself."

"Kitty Sheelan, I want the truth and I will have it!" the captain exclaimed, fiercely, for the first time betraying signs of anger. "Speak now and instantly, or I will do you a mischief that in all the years of your life you will never be able to forget!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRAP IS SPRUNG.

"FOR Heaven's sake, sir, go away and I've me alone!" Kitty cried, in genuine terror, the brogue coming out strong in her excitement.

Desmond Burke's reputation was none of the best; he was commonly reputed to be bold, hard-hearted, cruel and vindictive, and now, in this moment of peril, the girl firmly believed that he meant every word he had uttered, and that he would to the fullest extent, carry out his threat.

"Come, come; decide quickly!" he cried, in an angry voice. "I am in no mood to be trifled with. Reveal to me the truth or suffer, and by my eternal soul, I swear if you attempt to baffle my will, better had you be with a hungry wolf this night than in my power."

He advanced a step toward the girl as he finished the sentence; terribly alarmed by the action, Kitty screamed at the top of her lungs.

"Oh, you are only wasting breath!" the captain cried. "You are utterly helpless in my

power. Do, then, my bidding, or it will be the worse for you! Speak! Whose child is it?"

Again he advanced a step, and again the frightened girl screamed.

And then, with a step as light as a cat's, a man descended half-way down the open stairway that led to the upper apartments—a rough, red-bearded man, about the medium height, rudely attired. In his hand he clutched a revolver, and with the shining tube he menaced the life of Desmond Burke.

The fox was unearthed at last; there was not the slightest doubt in the captain's mind that the new-comer was the Irish outlaw, Shamus O'Brien.

"Good-avenin' to yer honor!" cried the man, with a strong Irish accent, ducking his head, in mock courtesy.

The man had made his appearance so abruptly that Burke was taken somewhat by surprise, although he felt sure that the outlaw was concealed within the house, and he had expected that the cries of the girl would be pretty certain to induce him to come out of his hiding-place. In truth, the captain had threatened the girl with the express idea of forcing O'Brien "to the fore."

He had his hand on his revolver, but O'Brien had appeared so suddenly that he had had no chance to draw it, and now that the other was menacing him with the leveled weapon, all the advantage of the situation was with the rebel.

"Aha, are you there, James O'Brien?" called out Burke, as cool as a cucumber.

"Meself, Jim O'Brien, if you please!" replied the other, with another mock bow.

"It is some times since I have had the pleasure of seeing you," the officer remarked, surveying the other with a great deal of interest.

O'Brien was splendidly disguised; attired as he was in a rough, dirty suit, like a drover, he looked nearly twice as big as he really was, and the rough beard and wig that he wore completely disguised him—so much so that even his most intimate friend would have been puzzled to have recognized, in the rough, burly drover-like man, the young, handsome, and elegant Shamus O'Brien.

"Upon me sowl, sur, if I had my way you wouldn't be afther seeing me now," the other replied, still persisting in speaking with a strong brogue, evidently trying to disguise his voice.

"Well, to come at once to the matter which more nearly concerns us than any other two men in this world, you and I are rivals, I presume, and, unfortunately for me, it is quite evident that you are the favored one."

"Sur, you are probably the best judge as to the likes of that," O'Brien replied, with another polite bow.

"I suppose that there is not much chance of my getting the lady as long as you are in the land of the living," Burke remarked.

"And that is the reason, I presume, why you and your sodgers have hunted me so carefully and closely. Bedad! if I wasn't as cute as an Irish fox, I would have been caught long ago."

"But, as it is, the tables are turned, and instead of my catching you, it is your good fortune to catch me."

"Faith!" cried the hunted man, with a laugh, "I believe that you have hit it this time, entirely."

"And now that you have caught me, what do you intend to do with me?"

"Troth! I'm like the man that caught the lion by the tail; he couldn't hold on, and he daren't let go!" O'Brien admitted. "I've got you fast enough, but what I am going to do with you is a puzzle."

"I can suggest a very easy way to settle it," Burke suggested, still preserving the cool and contemptuous tone in which he had at first spoken.

"If you do, sur, I shall consider meself your debtor."

"The obligation will not trouble you long," the captain answered, dryly. "You are armed, and so am I: you owe me revenge for shooting my horse the other day, for I presume that it is you that I have to thank for that—'special service.'"

"Sorra a taste of a lie in that!"

"The night is light enough for us to settle our little difficulty outside. An exchange of shots will, in all probability, settle which of us is to have the pleasure of looking after Miss Maggie Moore for the rest of her journey through this vale of tears."

"Upon me wound, sur, I don't believe that my life or death will make an atom of difference as far as you are concerned!" O'Brien exclaimed, scornfully.

"Allow me to console myself with the hope that it will," the captain retorted. "But come; what do you say? will you give me my revenge or not?"

"Oh, I'm your man!" O'Brien cried. "Upon my honor I never denied any one a chance to get a crack at me if there was the last taste of reason in the world in the wish so to do."

"I will walk off thirty paces, turn, and then—"

"May the best man win!" added the outlaw. "Go ahead, if you please."

The officer bowed, advanced to the door,

opened it and passed out. O'Brien followed, but the Goose-girl caught him by the arm as he passed over the threshold.

"Oh, Jim, why did you come from your hiding-place!" she exclaimed. "And it is all my fault! If this big villain hadn't nearly frightened the life out of me I wouldn't have let a cry escape me."

"Don't be alarmed, Kitty; I doubt if there is a man in Ireland who is my better with the revolver. I learned to handle the weapon in America, across the sea, and there were times, too, there, when I was on the frontier, when my life hung upon my skill as a marksman. So don't be frightened; I'll wing this red-coat and teach him a lesson which he sadly needs."

Then out through the door passed the proscribed man.

Burke was already in position and waiting for the appearance of the other.

"Are you all ready?" called out O'Brien.

"All ready!" the captain replied, drawing his revolver.

O'Brien raised his weapon, but before he could take aim and pull the trigger, out from the shrubbery that fringed the house sprang six men who had been concealed in the bushes, and, in a twinkling, they flung themselves upon O'Brien.

Although taken so much by surprise as to be unable to use his weapon, yet the outlaw made a vigorous resistance.

Down upon the ground went the struggling men, all in a heap. O'Brien struggled and kicked; despite the overwhelming odds against him, once he managed to nearly free himself from the grasp of his assailants and half rose to his feet. Burke was on the watch, though; he had advanced to the spot where the desperate struggle was taking place, and as he saw that O'Brien was getting the best of his assailants, he stooped, picked up a stick that one of the men had dropped, and as O'Brien, with a powerful effort shook himself free from his antagonists, and half rose to his feet, with cool, deliberate effort the captain gave O'Brien a vigorous crack on the head that dropped him as if he had been shot.

Down went the outlaw, striking the ground with a violent thud, all resistance for the time being completely taken out of him.

Smithers, who had been in command of the attacking force, but had refrained from taking any active part in the struggle, advanced in alarm.

"By Jove, captain!" he cried, "you have killed the man!"

"Oh, no; no fear of that," Burke replied, coolly. "An Irish head and a blackthorn twig are too old acquaintances for a little tap like that to do any serious mischief."

"A little tap!" exclaimed the lieutenant, in amazement. "By all the gods of war, my dear fellow, I wouldn't let any one crack me in that way for a thousand pounds! Why, the stroke was enough to fell an ox."

"Not the least bit of mischief done, and the fellow would have succeeded in getting away otherwise," Burke remarked. "Put the handcuffs on, Dooney."

The process-server had been the foremost one in the attack, and, as a natural consequence, had suffered considerably, for O'Brien had used both fist and feet with wonderful ability as the sore shins and bruised faces of nearly all of the assailants could testify.

Dooney had grabbed O'Brien with both hands, eager to revenge the wrongs which he had suffered, and the outlaw, with a half a dozen powerful blows, had completely altered the looks of the process-server's face. To use the old saying, he had put him in such a condition that his own mother wouldn't have known him.

MacDarrow was busily engaged in wiping the blood from his disfigured countenance, at the same time relieving his mind by swearing like a trooper, when the captain's order reached his ears.

Never was a command more gladly obeyed.

The manacles of a felon were snapped upon the wrists of the fallen man, whose only crime was that he loved Ireland and scorned to sell it.

Shamus O'Brien was now, hard and fast, in the power of his deadliest foe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SMITHERS PAYS A VISIT.

BURKE was quite correct in regard to his estimate of the thickness of an Irish head and the amount of violence it could sustain without serious damage, for in a short time O'Brien recovered from the stunning effects of the blow and looked up with undaunted eyes into the face of his captors.

The soldiers assisted him to his feet, and Burke, with a smile of conscious triumph, surveyed the man whom he had entrapped so cleverly.

"At last I have you, Mr. James O'Brien!" he exclaimed, without attempting to conceal the satisfaction that he felt at the success of his plans. "I felt sure that you were concealed in the house of this Goose-girl, and I felt equally sure that you would never be able to remain quiet in your place of concealment and listen to her cries for help, and you will now perceive

that the result is exactly as I anticipated. For quite a long time you have succeeded in escaping me, but there's an old adage, you know, about the pitcher and the well. You have tried it once too often, and as a natural consequence I have had the extreme pleasure of laying you by the heels."

"I may be able to return the compliment one of these days!" O'Brien replied, "and until that time I shall consider myself your debtor, but I shall know how to take you next time. I fancied that you were a gentleman and a man of honor, but now I see that I was deceived; you are nothing but a common thief-taker, a coward and sneak—a disgrace to the uniform you wear."

"Hard words break no bones," the captain observed, sententiously.

"Oh, I know that I am wasting breath on you!" O'Brien retorted, in scorn. "It is lucky for the English government, though, that such recreant Irishmen as you exist, or otherwise it would have to look far and wide among its native-born officers to find tools to do its dirty work. You are fitly chosen."

"You have plainly mistaken your vocation, Mr. Shamus O'Brien," Burke remarked, with deliberate coolness. "Instead of a patriot you should have been a fishwife. Fall in, men!"

The prisoner was conveyed directly to the residence of the old lawyer. Underneath the main part of the hall were some old vaults that in ancient times were constructed especially for dungeons. No doubt many an unhappy prisoner, captive to the chief of an ancient Irish Sept, had worn out his life within the cold confines of these old gray walls, cursing the unhappy fate that had confined him to these dungeons drear.

The captain in person had selected one of the cells—for the underground rooms were cells, to all intents and purposes—and prepared it for the reception of the prisoner. A long time before this had been done, for Burke had been on O'Brien's track ever since the news had reached him that the proscribed man had dared to return to Ireland.

And now, at last, the desperate and determined master of "Twelve Pins" had succeeded in the purpose upon which he had set his heart: Shamus O'Brien was completely in his power.

O'Neal Hall had been selected by the captain as being the safest place to hold the prisoner there was in the neighborhood. Not that Burke was very much apprehensive of an attempt at a rescue; still, he deemed it wise to take all the precautions in his power. If report spoke true O'Brien had once been the leading spirit of a secret order of United Irishmen, whose object it was to redress the wrongs which the "Saxons" had inflicted upon the Emerald Isle, either peaceably at the polls or openly by force of arms, if the time ever came when it seemed possible for Ireland to successfully make head against England's power in the open fields of war.

Whether this organization was broken up long ago, when O'Brien was forced to fly from the country, or still existed, more or less strong, was a mystery. The government spies and informers—for England's secret-service department in Ireland is far larger and more complete than the world imagines—declared that it did; but the declarations of these worthies, experience long since has decided, must be taken with a great deal of caution, for it is the secret-service spy's business to discover plots and conspiracies, but, if he is unable so to do, in nine cases out of ten he will invent a satisfactory excuse or otherwise his trade and reputation will suffer.

If the secret order still existed, and was in active operation, the capture of one of the principal leaders might be incentive enough to induce a determined effort to release him, particularly if the place where he was held in confinement was not strong or ably guarded.

Burke had not a very large force at his command, for he had been obliged to send off squads here and there to protect the process-servers, who, for the last few days, had been extremely busy serving their notices of ejectment, so that he had barely ten men left, and those ten not particularly good men either.

But, O'Neal Hall was as strong as any building in the county, and Burke felt confident that, in the case of an attack, he and his ten men could easily hold it against a host.

The captain speculated upon the chances of an attack, though, as an extremely remote probability, for in his opinion there wasn't the slightest danger of such a thing, although he knew as well as any man living that the peasants of the district were hot-headed, violent and dangerous men when roused to action.

Safe in the underground apartment O'Brien was put, and, for the first time in many months, Desmond Burke breathed freely. At last he saw a chance to escape from the difficulties which for so long a time had encompassed him!

The report spread rapidly throughout the county that Shamus O'Brien had been taken, and great were the sorrow and anger of the people at large. In their eyes Shamus was a hero worthy to rank by the side of the men of '98, the martyrs whose names stand so high on

the golden roll of the bold, brave hearts who risked life and all, that their country might be free.

Loud and deep were the curses heaped upon the head of the false Irishman, Desmond Burke, who had so cunningly entrapped the proscribed man.

"A bad bed Captain Burke was making for himself to lay on, some day!" one and all declared.

Probably the most sorrowful heart of all was the Goose-girl, for she blamed herself most bitterly as being the cause of O'Brien's capture, and in the indignation of her heart she cried out that she would be revenged on Desmond Burke if harm came to O'Brien.

Of course at such a threat the captain laughed, when information of it reached him.

He had too many strong men who were his bitter enemies, eager to do him harm in this world, to fear the malice of a helpless girl.

It was on the evening succeeding the one upon which O'Brien had been captured, and the Goose-girl and the old woman who lived with her, sat together debating the chances of Shamus's escape, for, with that subtle telegraphy, so difficult to comprehend, word was already flying around the country that the "boys" had made up their minds to make a bold push and rescue O'Brien from the hands of his captors.

Who started the rumor—who was to head the expedition, no one knew, yet the belief was strong that the attempt would be a success, and that, despite the strength of O'Neal Hall and the force under Desmond Burke's command, that was guarding the prisoner so closely, O'Brien would be restored to liberty.

A knock at the door interrupted the conversation between the two; the Goose-girl rose to answer the summons, and was astonished upon perceiving that it was Lieutenant Smithers who had knocked.

"Aw, good-evening, Miss Sheelan!" he exclaimed, with a very polite bow. "I thought that I would give myself the pleasure of calling upon you this evening, in order to see if you had completely recovered from the fright under which you labored last night."

Smithers had doffed his uniform, was in plain clothes, but got up regardless of expense.

Kitty was astonished, for she had never spoken two words to the man in all her life.

"Thank you kindly, sir; I am quite well, although not so aisy in my mind as I would like to be."

"I do not doubt it, in the least!" Smithers hastened to say, evidently anxious to make a favorable impression. "Perhaps if you will permit me to walk in for a few minutes, I may be able to offer you a little advice that may be of service to you."

Kitty was now doubly astonished, for she couldn't imagine what on earth the man could possibly have to say to her, but with that in-born courtesy so natural to the sons and daughters of Erin, she stepped aside from the doorway and invited him to enter.

"Come in, sir, and welcome," she said.

Smithers walked into the cottage, and as he did so the old woman got up and made him a profound courtesy. The lieutenant, although an English officer, was very well liked in the district. His odd, eccentric ways rather appealed to Pat's love of fun; and then, too, being an Englishman, it was only natural that he should wear the red-coat, for of course a man ought to stand up for his own country; but for Desmond Burke the peasantry had no word bitter enough.

"You're heartily welkim, yer honor," said the old dame.

The lieutenant honored the old woman with a profound bow, which delighted her greatly. Probably one of the secrets of Smithers's popularity was that he was universally courteous to all, both high and low. As the lieutenant often remarked, "There isn't any deuced beggar in the country, you know, that is going to be any more civil than I am. I'll be hanged if I'm going to be outdone in politeness by any of these ragged fellows."

But, although the lieutenant was extremely gracious to the old woman, yet it was quite evident that her presence acted as a restraint upon him, for when the Goose-girl asked him to be seated, he hesitated for a moment and looked at the dame before he complied.

The old woman, with the natural acuteness of her race, understood from his manner that he wished to be alone with the girl, and thinking he might have something important to communicate, she excused herself and withdrew, retiring up-stairs.

Smithers was a pretty cool fellow, generally, but on the present occasion he was somewhat embarrassed.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

THE lieutenant had seated himself by the side of the table that stood in the center of the apartment, with his back to the door, and Kitty sat down upon the opposite side of the table.

As we have said, Smithers was about as cool and "cheeky" to use the slang of the London

streets, as mortal man could well be, but for once in his life he was in doubt how to proceed.

The girl sat as quiet as a mouse, waiting for him to begin, wonder shining in her great gray-blue eyes, and Smithers, gazing earnestly at her, vainly striving to find the easiest way to say what he had to communicate, saw that common report was not far from the truth when it declared that the Goose-girl was as about as pretty a maid as all Connemara could boast.

The thought passing through his mind suddenly found expression in words.

"By Jove! Miss Sheelan, do you know that you are a deuced pretty girl?" he exclaimed, abruptly.

Kitty laughed and blushed; she was not offended, for the speaker's manner was entirely respectful. It was as if he had suddenly made the discovery and was unable to conceal his amazement!

"I hope, you know, that you won't feel offended at my awkward way of speaking. I can't help it, you know; I suppose that I was born that way."

"I am afraid, sir, that since you have been in Ireland you have been after kissing the blarney stone," she observed, archly.

"Oh, no; no flattery, upon my honor."

"It's aisy to say that, sir, but it won't be in my conscience to believe you."

"Oh, it is the truth; upon my soul it is!" the lieutenant protested. "Why, I have heard ever so many fellows say so!"

Again the girl laughed and blushed, for Smithers had a very grave and earnest way with him.

"But it is the truth," he repeated. "There can't be any doubt about that, you know, for what every one says must be true."

"It's joking ye are!"

"Oh, no, upon my honor; I give you my word I never was more serious in the whole course of my life; and in fact, Miss Sheelan, I am so impressed with your appearance—your numerous good qualities and all that sort of thing, you know, that I have taken the liberty to call upon you to-night to solicit the pleasure of becoming better acquainted with you."

The lieutenant was as grave as a judge, and Katy stared in greater amazement than before. At first the idea came to her that this was all a joke on the part of the English officer and he had called for the express purpose of making game of her. Smithers had done so many eccentric things since he had come into Connemara that the folks generally would not be astonished at almost any odd act upon his part.

The girl would have been quick to resent such a remark, upon the part of almost any one occupying a station so far above her own, as an insult, but the manner of Smithers rendered it impossible for her to take it in that way. He was either in dead earnest or else jesting, and for the life of her the bewildered girl couldn't tell which.

"You are a most charming young lady," he continued, finding that the girl hesitated to speak. "In fact, the finest young lady that I have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with for a very great period of time. I am aware that this sort of thing is rather sudden—it sort of takes you by surprise, but this is a fast age, you know—the age of miracles, in fact, and what wouldn't have been just the cheese, you know—excuse the expression—a few years ago, is all right now."

"But I don't understand you, sir," the girl said, in confusion.

The idea of this wealthy Englishman, as Smithers was known to be, expressing admiration for her, and in such a respectful manner, why, it fairly astounded her.

"By Jove! is it possible that I have not succeeded in making myself understood?" Smithers exclaimed, amazed. "But I suppose that it is so deuced sudden it sort of stuns you, you know, and all that sort of thing. I ought to have taken more time, but I'm such a deuced impulsive fellow, you know. I can't help it, by Jove! I always was that way, born so, you know. But you see, Miss Sheelan, you are such a regular first-chop girl that you have made a deep impression upon me. I think that you are the most charming young lady I have ever seen, and I made up my mind that, if a fellow wanted a nice little wife, he might go further and fare much worse than by taking such a girl as you are, Miss Sheelan."

The girl fairly caught her breath in amazement; she could hardly believe that she had heard aright. What! was it possible that this wealthy English gentleman was seriously in earnest in what he said?

The lieutenant was quick to read the meaning of the expression of doubt and distrust that appeared upon the girl's face, and he at once applied himself to remove this impression.

"Oh, I am in earnest, upon my word I am!" he exclaimed. "Never was more serious in the whole course of my natural existence. You are just the kind of girl that I have been looking for for a deuced long time, and now that I have found you I intend to make you Mrs. Plantagenet Smithers as soon as I can get those charming red lips of yours to consent."

"Oh, sure, sir, it's joking ye are!"

"Upon my word I am not. I never was in more sober, serious earnest in all my life!" the Englishman protested. "You doubt me; I know that it is deuced sudden, but that is just the sort of odd fish that I am, you know. After we get married, you know, you'll get a great deal better acquainted with me; and, upon my word, I assure you, you'll find me to be a deuced nice fellow."

By this time the girl began to believe that the lieutenant really was in earnest, and although she was extremely flattered by the honor yet she could not refrain from laughing at the extremely odd wooing.

"Oh, sir, you have taken me so entirely by surprise!" she demurred.

"Of course, I know it is sudden, but that is the kind of fellow I am, you know. I never do anything like anybody else, never did, you know, in all my life. But if you don't believe me, send for the priest and we will be married at once."

"Send for the priest now!" cried Kitty, in some alarm.

"Yes, just as soon as you like. Oh, I mean what I say. Fetch the priest and I will make you Mrs. Smithers before you are an hour older!" The lieutenant was in earnest with a vengeance.

"Oh, it is altogether too sudden."

"Well, it is rather so, I suppose, but when two people make up their minds, you know, the sooner they get out of their misery the better."

"But I haven't made up my mind yet!" averred the Goose-girl, archly.

"Yes, but you will make it up—soon, too, of course." The officer was so self-assured he couldn't think a refusal among the things possible.

"Well, I don't know," Kitty responded; "I ought to have more time to think the matter over. There's two or three boys that are coming after me."

"Oh, you don't want any of them!" and Smithers's face expressed disgust. "I'll make a lady out of you, Miss Sheelan."

"But I'm not used to being a lady."

"You will get used to it, very soon," he assured. "I tell you what it is, Kitty, you will not be the first Irish girl who has jumped at a bound from pigs and praties to silks and diamonds."

"But, suppose that I don't care anything about you?"

"Oh, I flatter myself, you know, that my care and attention will make you love me, in time. I am willing to risk that if you will only say the word!"

It was very flattering to the vanity of the girl to be sought after in this fashion, for she just managed to get along, and in the future Tom Pepper couldn't promise much, situated as he was.

Then all of a sudden there came to the girl a remembrance of the scene in which she had played so prominent a part.

"Oh, I forgot; I am already married!" she announced, in considerable confusion.

"Oh, yes, one does forget those little things, once in a while," the lieutenant observed.

"But, my dear Miss Sheelan, I understand all that, and so does everybody else. That charming action of yours—that delightful fiction did not deceive any one; we all knew that you were swerving from the truth for the laudable purpose of screening Miss Moore, or Mrs. O'Brien as I presume she is, in reality. Everybody understood that, and I believe that that noble action on your part was the first thing to cause the sentiment of love to take possession of this manly bosom of mine. It was really noble—superb! In fact, it is really hard to find words to express the admiration that I feel at such a generous deed, but it did not work as you expected; the truth was altogether too apparent."

"And in spite of everything you are ready to make me your wife?"

"My dear Miss Kitty, trot out the holy father as soon as you please!" was Smithers's sturdy answer.

The girl laughed at the perfect sangfroid of the Englishman.

"I'm real sorry, but I cannot accept," she said, slowly.

"The deuce you say! Not accept? Impossible!"

"I have given my word to another."

"Oh, never mind that; tell him to go to the deuce, or let me know who it is and I will quickly make him resign all pretensions or else my name is not Smithers. I'm a deuced obstinate fellow when I get a-going!"

"It is impossible!" Kitty persisted.

And at this point the interview was rudely interrupted. The door was flung violently open and eight or ten men with carters' frocks drawn over their clothes, and their faces either blackened or covered with crape, rushed into the room and surrounded Smithers.

CHAPTER XX.

A NEW MOVE.

Nor the slightest warning had been given of this attack, and so quickly had the operation been performed that almost the first intimation

the lieutenant received of danger was when the disguised men gathered around, flourishing their weapons, so quickly did the assailants move.

Smithers, too, was sitting with his back to the door, so that the surprise was complete.

"Silence!" cried a brawny fellow, evidently the leader of the party, covering the person of the girl with a double-barreled shot-gun, which he held ready cocked in his hands, in an extremely menacing manner; "don't be after sc'aming—don't utter a sound above a whisper, or it will be the worse for yees."

It needed no ghost to come from the grave to tell the lieutenant into whose hands he had fallen.

For years and years the Emerald Isle has been noted for its bands of disguised and armed men, made desperate by their situation, or outlawed for their crimes.

Under a dozen titles have these secret bands been known, White Boys, Ribbonmen, Molly Maguires, and Peep-o'-Day Boys.

One and all the same; desperate peasant, rendered reckless and careless of all consequences by real or fancied wrongs, and striving to obtain either redress or revenge by means of violence's wild, red and ruthless hands.

Ignorant, foolish patriots sometimes, led on by leaders, as simple as themselves, who dreamed that Ireland could be freed from English rule by means of these scattered, unconcerted "risings," or else relatives banded together to avenge, by means of a fearful, bloody and generally cowardly crime, some wrong which had been inflicted upon one of their number by some hard-hearted landlord or unscrupulous middleman or agent.

And then, again, brutal, blood-stained ruffians adopted the disguise originally assumed by the ardent patriots, or by the family avengers, to cover deeds of rapine and cruelty.

But, the moment the English lieutenant looked upon the men who had entered the house so abruptly, he understood into whose hands he had fallen.

The Government long ago had had secret information that a well-organized league existed in Connemara, bound together by fearful oaths to do anything calculated to advance the "cause," the object of which was the freedom of Ireland. This secret order was reported to be organized with far greater skill than any similar one that had ever existed in the green isle, for the leaders believed in working by secret cunning as well as by open force. England could be annoyed and hampered as well in the political field, and with far more certainty of success attending the effort, as by an open, warlike rising.

The leaders of the movement were shrewd men; they did not hope to free Ireland entirely from the rule of the hated "Saxon," but they did hope to abolish existing laws and customs which pressed heavily upon the natives "to the manor born."

"And you, sur!" continued the masked man, addressing himself to the lieutenant, "don't be after letting a cry out of you, or else we shall be obligated to give the officer next to you a chance for promotion, do ye mind?"

Smithers understood the meaning of the threat perfectly well, although it was couched in rather ambiguous language, but it did not seem to affect him in the least; he appeared as cool and unconcerned as though he was at home in his own barracks.

"All right, my boy!" he answered. "I understand; I surrender at discretion. You fellows have got me this time, in a beastly way. I am unarmed; I don't believe that I have even got a penknife on me, so of course I submit like a lamb to the slaughter. You're deuced lucky, too, for I've got nearly twenty pounds in my pocket."

"You thafe of an Englishman, do ye think that we would be after taking your dirty money?" roared the leader, in a rage.

"Why, of course!" Smithers replied, astonished; "isn't that what you are after—isn't that the little game—spoiling the Egyptians?"

"No, sur! we'd scorn to touch a penny of it!"

"Yes," spoke up another one of the band, evidently a man well in years by the sound of his voice, "we would scorn to take your money, although there's many of us here with wives and children that have barely tasted bite or sup this day; but we are not robbers, but decent min that ye and the likes of yees have forced to become rapparees becase we can only meet force wid force."

Smithers appeared a little ill at ease; the matter was evidently far more serious than he had supposed. These men were not robbers—paltry, petty thieves who had taken him unawares so as to be able to help themselves to his valuables, but good United Irishmen, who were striking at him on account of the uniform that he wore.

"Well, if you don't want my money—if you do not mean to rob me, what is the meaning of this sort of thing, eh?" he asked, with just a little bit of anxiety perceptible in his tone.

"Shamus O'Brien!" responded the big, brawny fellow, gravely.

"Yes, I know; what of him?"

"Where is he now?"

"In O'Neal Hall."

"As a guest?"

"Well, no, not exactly," Smithers admitted, somewhat embarrassed.

"Phat thin?"

The lieutenant felt decidedly uncomfortable under this cross-examination.

"Well, I presume—of course—that he is a prisoner."

"An' phat will they do wid im?"

"Upon my word, I don't know!"

"I'm sorry for that," the disguised leader remarked, much to Smithers's amazement, who couldn't for the life of him perceive any reason why his ignorance in regard to O'Brien should be a cause of sorrow to the other.

"Yis, sur, I am very sorry for that," the Irishman repeated, with a shake of the head.

"My dear sir, I trust that you will excuse my curiosity, but I can't help it—I was born that way, you know, if I ask you why you should be sorry, under the circumstances?"

"It would make your mind 'asier, that's all."

"Make my mind easier!" and Smithers stared.

"Yis, if you only knew phat they would be after doing wid Shamus O'Brien."

"My esteemed, although unknown friend, will you allow me to remark that I cannot see what earthly difference it can possibly make to me, whether I know what is to be done with Mr. Shamus O'Brien or not? I assure you, upon my word of honor as a gentleman and a scholar, I don't care two farthings about the matter, either one way or the other."

"Mebbe you will, in time," the other remarked, in a very meaning sort of way, which had the effect of making the lieutenant stare again.

"Well, perhaps I may, but I trust that you will excuse me if I doubt it!" retorted Smithers, nettled that he could not guess the riddle.

"Shamus O'Brien has been put down in the cells under O'Neal Hall, I believe?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"An' it's hanging him they'll be pretty soon, I suppose?"

"Well, I don't know about that, although I presume that he will be tried for his life, and if he is found guilty, the probabilities are that he will be hanged."

"It's a lie! he is not guilty!" cried the Irishman, fiercely.

Smithers looked annoyed. He was not the kind of man to submit to be told that he lied with calmness, but under the circumstances the Irishman had decidedly the advantage in the argument.

"I did not say that he was, you know!" the lieutenant placated; "and I say, my friend, it isn't polite to tell a man that he lies right to his face, you know, particularly under such circumstances as exist at present. My hands are tied now, you know, so to speak, and if they wasn't, and you told me I lied I would knock you down, you know."

"Mebbe ye can't spell the word able!" the Irishman suggested, contemptuously.

"Oh, as to that, you know, that is easily tested. Suppose you come outside, lay aside your gun, and in about two minutes we'll find out."

"I've other fish to fry!" was the only response to this challenge.

And it was lucky for him that he did not accept Smithers's invitation, for the lieutenant, despite his peculiar oddities, was an athlete in every sense of the word; he had pulled an oar in the dark-blue crew; he was reputed to be one of the finest amateur boxers in England, and there is very little doubt that, despite the Irishman's superior size and weight, if he had gone out and made the trial Smithers would have polished him off handsomely and with very little trouble.

"Yis, sur, I have other fish to fry," continued the disguised leader, "and I'll not be after bothering meself wid the likes of ye. So you don't know phat they are going to do wid Shamus O'Brien, but you do know that he's in jail—that he is going to be tried, and that he is likely to be hung."

"He may escape with his life, but that is about all."

"Desmond Burke holds him; he hasn't turned him over to the Government yet?"

"He cannot very well at present—not until he gets a strong force together so as to send him under guard, for the captain has an idea that some fellows of your kidney might try a rescue on the road if the prisoner was not strongly guarded."

"Faith! he's right ther!" the Irishman confessed, "but that is not the only game that we can play. Captain Burke is a big friend of yours?"

"Yes, I suppose so; tolerably friendly, you know."

"An' he'll be after feeling bad whin he hears that you are in our hands—that we have shut you up in a cave worse than the cell that O'Brien is in, and that we have made up our minds to hang ye to the nearest tree the day that the troopers come into the district to take O'Brien away."

The truth was out, at last. The United Irish-

men had captured the lieutenant for the express purpose of holding him as a hostage for O'Brien!

Smithers was in the trap and escape seemed impossible.

CHAPTER XXI.

RETRIBUTION.

"BUT I say, you know this sort of thing is all stupid rot, you know!" the lieutenant expostulated. "You are only making mischief for yourself. You can't save O'Brien, you know; you can't bully the Government—it won't have it; and although you may kill me, yet it will cost all of you your lives, for I am an Englishman, and England will have revenge for my blood even if to hunt you all down it has to chase you to the furthest ends of the earth."

"All men must die, some time," the Irishman responded, grimly, "and we'll have the satisfaction of having revenge first, anyhow."

Smithers understood that it was merely a waste of words to attempt to argue with these men. The iron was in their souls, their blood was up, and nothing short of a miracle could stay them from executing their purpose.

"We'll be atther blinding your eyes," the leader said, "but don't be alarmed; you are not in any danger now. Shure! we'll look atther you as carefully as though yees was made of glass. No danger will come to yee if Captain Burke is r'asonable, or until the troopers come to take bould boy of Glingall away. We will pass a wee bit of a cord, too, about your arms, for fear that your passion might get the better of your prudence, and so force us to do you a mischief on the way."

"You are so extremely polite that, really, I can't find it in my heart to object to anything, you know," and Smithers gave a grimace as the Irishmen proceeded to bandage his eyes and pinion his arms.

This performance accomplished, the leader turned to the girl, who, with anxious eyes, had watched the strange scene which had been enacted in her little cottage.

"Kitty Sheelan, kape your own counsel; don't breathe a word of that you have seen this night to mortal soul. We will be atther letting the proper persons know that the sodger has gone off wid us to pay a visit to our mountain home, so you need not trouble yerself about the matter. You kin go and tell the priest, Father Malone, if it plases ye, and he will tell ye phat to do, but our messenger will reach Captain Burke the first thing in the morning, and we will send a token by him so that he will know that we are in dead earnest in this same business."

The words were light enough, and yet they concealed a fearful meaning.

With their prisoner the disguised men departed, leaving the girl almost speechless with terror. She thought that she had looked upon the face of Smithers for the last time, for she knew Desmond Burke well enough to comprehend that he would not be likely to be stirred one single jot from his determined path by this bold action on the part of the United Irishmen.

What cared he whether Smithers lived or died so that he accomplished the purpose which he had in view?

Outside the cottage the lieutenant was given in charge of three good, stout men, and they set off with the prisoner in a northerly direction, while the rest started on a new quest.

A short half-mile from the cottage of the Goose-girl the cabin of Dooney MacDarrow, the process-server, was situated.

This man of dirty work was so universally disliked, and had made himself so obnoxious to the people at large, that fear of violence had made him fortify his house like a castle.

Stout bolts guarded the doors, and the little windows were protected with shutters of good oak plank.

Dooney was a wary bird; did not intend that any desperate man who had been rendered reckless by some petty act of tyranny, should have a chance to creep up to the window and with a charge of buckshot square the account.

"Hunting" landlords, agents and process-servers has for years been a favorite pastime with the homeless, wandering men evicted from their holdings, and Dooney had long ago made up his mind that he would not be game for any desperate foe.

And, with the process-server thus housed and guarded, and ever on the watch, it was no easy task that these minions of night undertook, when they essayed to draw Dooney MacDarrow from his fortalice.

But, there were cunning wits in the gang, and they had planned a shrewd scheme.

Against a man they deemed that Dooney would be proof, and so they skillfully put forward a woman to draw the wily fox from his hole.

As cautiously as so many specters they glided on toward the cabin, and then concealing themselves, they sent the woman forward to knock at the door.

The hoarse voice of Dooney answered from within:

"Who's there?"

"It's me, the widdy Murtha."

"Phat do yees want?"

"I've come wid the trifle of rint, if you plase," the decoy replied. "I didn't dare to bring it in the daytime for fear some of the neighbors would see me, and shure! wouldn't they be atther murderin' me if they knew I pay the rint in full whin they were all houlding back for to spite the gentry?"

"How much have you wid you?"

"The hull of it, long life to your honor!—the ilegant four pounds, and hard it has been for me to scrape it together, glory be to Heaven!"

"Is there any one wid ye, Mrs. Murtha?" asked the process-server, suspiciously.

"Who should there be wid me?" the woman cried. "Do yees think that it is myself that's anxious to be kilt, and wouldn't I be bate black and blue if they knew that I had paid the monee? Hurry up and take it, and I've me be off, afore some wan sees me!"

"All right; whin I open the door poke it in through the crack, bek'ase I'm afeard that I might take could if I open the door too widely."

Dooney was an extremely cautious mortal, and inside the door he had an ingenious arrangement, so that the door could only be opened a certain distance, about three inches, so that he could not be surprised by a sudden rush.

"Yis, sur, glory be to ye, and may ivery hair in your head turn into a wax candle to light ye to glory!" was the widow's wish.

"Ow, ow! it's a soft tongue that ye have in that head of yours, widdy," Dooney added, as he proceeded to unbar and unbolt the door.

The men without breathed with bated breath as they listened to the sound of the heavy oak bar being removed, and the grating noise of the bolts as they moved with a melancholy sort of shriek in the rusty iron catches.

Soon their hated foe would be in their power, for it was evident Dooney had no suspicion a trap had been laid for him.

The door opened cautiously, but neither the woman nor the concealed men without made any attempt to force it open, for MacDarrow's cunning contrivance to prevent a surprise was well known to them.

All had been thought of, and all provided for. Three inches the door opened, and in the little gleam of light that came through it, the face of the process-server could be seen.

The widdy had the foot of a stocking in her hand, in which the coins had been placed, and as they were nearly all of small denomination, the little bag was quite a bulky one; a string tightly wound round the end confined the coins in their place.

"Poke the money through," said Dooney.

"Ow, ow! it won't go; it's too big."

"Try, try! squeeze the bag, or undo it and pour 'em into my hand."

The woman attempted to execute the first command, and in so vigorous a manner, that the old stocking-foot, being very much the worse for wear, gave way under the pressure, and out tumbled the coins.

"Oh, will ye see that? Phat will I do now, entirely?" she howled in anguish.

"Hush yer cry, ye old catamaran!" cried Dooney, in a rage. "Dad 'cess to the likes of ye, phat did ye do that for?"

"I couldn't help it, yer honor, long life to ye!" she whimpered. "The curse of Cromwell on it!"

Meanwhile, Dooney, through the crack of the door, had taken a good look around, and not perceiving any one—so carefully had the men without concealed themselves—thought that he might venture to open the door.

The woman dropped down upon her hands and knees and commenced to pick up the scattered coins.

The process-server removed the barricade within and opened the door wide enough to allow the light to stream out, so that he might be able to see the coins.

"Be my sowl, widdy Murtha!" he muttered, as he stooped in the search, "it's four pound in copper pieces, entirely, you have brought, for mighty little silver do I see."

"There's wan foine gold piece, there by the dure!" she cried, pointing out where the bright coin shone.

"Begob! yer gold piece is a bright penny!" he growled, as his fingers closed upon it.

That remark was the last the collector was fated to make for some time, for the leader of the masked men had crept slyly around the corner of the house, and as MacDarrow finished speaking, he darted suddenly forward and dealt the process-server a terrible whack on the head with the "soft" end of a good blackthorn twig.

The stroke was almost powerful enough to have felled an ox, let alone a man, and Dooney, with just a single convulsive upward movement of the hands, as though striving to ward off the blow after it was received, went down like a log, stunned.

Even Dooney's hard head could not withstand such an awful crack.

"At last," cried the avenger, "the process-server is in our hands, and bitter had luck to us if we don't get even wid him!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A BLOODY MESSAGE.

A WILDER bit of land than that known as Joyce's Country, in the upper part of Conne-mara, probably does not exist in all Ireland. The sterile soil laughs at the efforts of the husbandman, and few and far between are the holdings of the inhabitants.

To a secluded glen in this wild and desolate part of the country the lieutenant had been conducted, and after the process-server had been secured, stunned by the vigorous blow, he had been blindfolded, his arms bound, his person secured to a rude hurdle which his assailants constructed from some pieces of wood which they procured from the cow-stable at the back of the process-server's cabin; and then up into Joyce's Country they bore the prisoner.

Into the wild glen where the lieutenant had been carried, Dooney was conveyed. He had recovered the use of his senses long before the end of his journey, and he fully comprehended the terrible situation in which he had been placed. But what was the object of all this trouble? Why he was being carried away, he could not understand.

He had come to calculate upon the chance of a sudden death, and, grown reckless by long exposure, had begun to believe that he bore a charmed life, proof against all danger; but this mysterious attack, what did it mean? Where was he being carried, and when he reached the place of destination what did his captors intend to do with him?

At last, as we have said, in the secluded glen, far from all human habitation, the disguised men halted.

In the center of the glen a large fire burned, and the strangely-disguised Irishmen gathering around it looked like so many demons fresh from the lower world.

The moon, slowly rising, shed its soft light over the strange scene.

The bandages were removed from the eyes of both of the captives and in astonishment they looked around them.

The lieutenant had been seated upon a fallen tree, and when the process-server arrived, they placed him by the side of the officer.

"Hallo! by Jove! Have they got you, too?" Smithers exclaimed, as his eyes fell upon the informer. "Well, they say that misery loves company, but in this case I feel deuced sorry for you, and I wish that you were well out of the scrape."

Dooney was deadly pale, for he suspected that some terrible ordeal was before him, but, when he found that the lieutenant was also a prisoner, in a measure it made him feel more tranquil. The Irishmen, however desperate, would never surely dare to offer violence to a man who wore her majesty's uniform.

Three of the disguised men who had been grouped together in the center of the glen, busily engaged in conversation, were evidently the leaders of the party, and when they separated, and the taller man of the three, the same who had acted as spokesman when Smithers was captured, approached the captives, both of them understood that operations were about to be begun.

"Lieutenant Smithers, mebbe ye think that it was joking I was in Kitty Sheelan's house whin I told ye phat we would boys of the mountain proposed to do," he began, "and we want to convince ye that we are in earnest, so we have persuaded this gentleman to come along."

"By me faith, man, it's yerself and yer comrades that will rue this night's wourk afore ye are many days older, or my name is not Dooney MacDarrow!" the server cried, his courage beginning to return, and his inclination to try his usual bullying game strengthening.

"Ye think that we will be atther repenting this night's wourk, do ye?"

"I do that same!"

"Thin, by the soul of the mother that bore me, we'll do something so that we may have good cause to repent!" the disguised Irishman cried, a volume of fearful meaning in his tone.

MacDarrow shuddered despite his iron nerves. "Take care phat ye are about!" Dooney cried, in desperation. "I represent the law, do ye mind? Whin ye strike at me, ye break the law, and there isn't one of ye to the fore here that won't be atther repenting it afore ye are many days oulder."

"Oh, hould your whist, ye dirty thafe of the world!" cried the masked leader of the band, in a tone of supreme contempt. "Ye are only wasting yer breath; ye might as well talk to wan of these rocks and think to make an impression upon it as to hope to move us from our purpose. We don't care the weight of a pin for the law that ye talk so big about, and I'm atther thinking that it's mighty little good the law will do ye here."

"Ye don't dare to kill me!" MacDarrow exclaimed, desperate through impotent anger, "and if ye ill-treat me, I'll remember it ag'in' every wan of ye to the longest day that I live, mind that now!"

"Ye will have to find us out furst, ye hound of the law!" the Irish leader replied. "But now, we have had talk enough; we want a lit-

the action. It is a hard name that ye have made for yourself, Dooney MacDarrow, since ye have come into Connemara. Many a widly's curse rests upon your shoulders. In all the time since ye kem into this county ye have never shown mercy to any wan, and now the time has come when no mercy will be shown to you. You are quite right in one thing, though; yer worthless life isn't in any danger; not but what ye deserve killing a dozen times over, but that is not the game that we are afther this night. We are going to make an example of ye—an example and a warning. Captain Desmond Burke is your patron and yer backer, and when we strike you it is the same as a blow at him. Shamus O'Brien is in Burke's hands, and now, through ye, we, the bould boys of the mountain, say to Desmond Burke that Shamus O'Brien must be released."

"It's nonsense ye're talking!" the process-server hotly answered. "If you know Desmond Burke, as it is likely ye do, all of ye ought to know that he will laugh at your threats; and thin, too, how can he release O'Brien? Isn't the man in the hands of the Government, and will he not have to be tried for phat he has done?"

"He's not in the hands of the Government, yet!" the masked leader retorted, significantly. "We know where he is, well enough, and we know that Desmond Burke can wink at his escape if he wants to."

"But he won't—put that in your pipe and smoke!" and MacDarrow spoke defiantly.

An ugly growl came from the throats of the disguised men at this bravado, but with a gesture the leader of the band restrained the rest.

"Hold hard, boys!" he commanded; "we talk furst then act aftherward. Now, Mister Process-server, have the politeness and the gentility to bear this message to Captain Desmond Burke, and take care not to whisper it on the way, either, to any other living sowl. We have the leftenant in our hands and no harm will come to him if O'Brien is allowed to escape. Burke can arrange it aisyly enough if he has a mind to, but if he delivers Shamus into the hands of the Government, thin bitter bad luck will come to the leftenant and to Desmond Burke himself the very furst time that we get a crack at him. It's a bloody message, mind, that we boys of the mountain are sending."

"Shure, you'll only get well laughed at for your pains!" Dooney replied, impudently, his courage returning when he realized that he was in no immediate danger.

"Faix! there will be wan man who won't do much laughing, when he thinks of the boys of the mountains," the masked man reminded, and then with his hand he signaled to the rest.

All had evidently been arranged beforehand, for in a twinkling the process-server was seized by a dozen pair of hands and carried by main force, despite his struggles, to a large tree at the upper end of the glen. To the trunk of this tree he was securely bound, his face to the trunk and his back exposed.

Then, with some stout limber switches the server was most thoroughly beaten until he roared and yelled for mercy in the most abject manner.

Never had the jacket of a petty tyrant been more thoroughly dusted.

The punishment completed, the wretch was released from the tree, again blindfolded and conducted back to the neighborhood of Ballinahinch, where he was dismissed with a warning to be sure and deliver his message correctly.

The wrath of Desmond Burke when MacDarrow told his story was great.

"If they want Shamus O'Brien let them come and take him!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HEIRESS DECIDES.

THE bold captain was considerably astonished by the audacious movement on the part of the secret league. True, he had a suspicion that such leagues existed in the district, for Fenianism is not altogether a scare and a bugbear; he felt pretty sure, too, that O'Brien was hand in glove with all these secret organizations, but that the "boys of the mountain," as they termed themselves, should have the audacity to lay violent hands upon a man wearing her majesty's uniform was really quite beyond his comprehension. But, it was a threat, only. He felt quite sure of that; the secret league would never dare to proceed to extremities; bold and unscrupulous as might be the leaders in this outrage, yet they would hesitate before they inflicted any bodily harm upon the lieutenant, and so bring down upon their heads the wrath of Britain.

Smithers and he were known to be intimate friends—boon companions, in fact, and upon this circumstance the conspirators counted. They calculated that at all risks he, Burke, would do all in his power to get Smithers out of the unpleasant "hole" into which he had fallen.

"If the derisive Miss Moore is inclined to be reasonable, then this fellow may have a chance to save his precious person from an English

jail," he muttered, as he reflected in regard to the matter.

To the old lawyer Burke made known his plan and the astute O'Glory jumped eagerly at the chance to assist the scheming captain.

The "trifle of money" that Burke had wheedled out of him was probably the main reason why O'Glory was so willing to aid in the matter. If the dashing captain succeeded, he would be in funds again, and would be able to settle the lawyer's claim; if the captain did not succeed in getting the money from the heiress, the chances were about a thousand to one that O'Glory would never see the color of his guineas again.

It was Desmond Burke's last, desperate chance; if he failed now, he would surely go to the wall, and his creditors might consider themselves lucky if they got coppers where they had advanced gold-pieces.

As ambassador, then, from Captain Burke, the old lawyer approached the heiress of Killkerran.

Of course Miss Moore had not been kept in ignorance of the fact that O'Brien had been captured, and was lodged in one of the dungeon-cells, deep down beneath the old Hall.

She had said very little, though, and those who expected a violent outburst of grief on receipt of the news, were disappointed. Young as she was, the heiress had learned to veil her emotions.

With perfect calmness, then, she received the old lawyer.

"Upon me word, me dear gurl, it's sorry I am to know that Shamus O'Brien is in the hands of the sodgers, at last," O'Glory declared, with a hypocritical whine, which did not deceive the heiress in the least. "It was mighty unwise for him to come back to the country afther he was once safe out of it, and though it is a hard thing to say, maybe, yet, me dear Miss Maggie, it is yerself, alanna, that brought the foolish boy back."

"If he had taken my advice he would not have come," she replied, quietly. "If he had done as I wished, he would have waited until I attained my majority and then I would have joined him beyond the sea."

"Yes, but youth will be rash, you know!" with a wise shake of the head. "It's an ugly fix that he is in, too, for Captain Desmond Burke, you know, has no reason to love him, for if it wasn't for O'Brien the captain thinks that ye might be afther listening to his suit."

"The captain flatters himself!" the heiress exclaimed, disdainfully.

"Oh, to be shure, I know that! I know that sorra a chance has he ever had, at all, at all. I thought that he did once, you know; and thinking that it would be a good match, I did all I could to induce you to favor the captain's suit. Of course I see now that I was wrong—that the captain was not the man for a gurl like ye, but that was a mistake of mine; we are all liable to make mistakes, ye know, but I'm sorry now that I did it, and I hope that ye bear me no ill-will, for I did phat I thought was for the best."

"Oh, it is all over now; it is a thing of the past, and I never think of it!"

"That is like you, Maggie, the best-hearted gurl that there is in Ireland this day!" O'Glory exclaimed, with enthusiasm in his tone. "And, Maggie, dear, I don't feel hard about the matter either, although I own I had a very strong prejudice ag'in' Mister O'Brien, but I've got all over that now; in fact, I feel very sorry indeed for the poor young man in his present position, and I have been afther racking me wits for to find some way to get him out."

The young girl looked at the old lawyer in a way that evidently expressed suspicion of his sincerity, but O'Glory was honest in the matter; he was acting in O'Brien's interest, for he saw no other way to recover the money which he had loaned to Burke.

"That, seemingly, is a hopeless task," she declared.

"Oh, no, not at all!" he confidently announced. "Shure! the thing can be done—not aisyly of course, for it is difficult, wourk it how you will; but it can be done, if you choose to say the wourd!"

"I?" and the heiress betrayed her astonishment.

"Yis, it all depinds upon you."

"Upon me?" and a dark suspicion came into the mind of the young girl.

"Oh, it is all fair and above-board!" he hastened to say. "I give you me word of honor as a gentleman and an honest man that Mister O'Brien can be saved, and it does not require any sacrifice on your part, either. That is whin I say that it does not require any sacrifice on your part I mane that the sacrifice is a trifle, and I know as well as that I am standing here that you won't stand for it for a moment."

"Pray do not keep me in suspense!" the girl cried, hastily, and in evident agitation; "let me know at once what it is that is required of me."

"Mind, ye're not to say a word about it to mortal soul—not even to Shamus O'Brien!" the old lawyer urged.

"I will not make any promises in the dark!" the heiress replied, impetuously. "Let me

know first what it is—and if the sacrifice is one that I can make with honor, both to myself and to Shamus O'Brien, be assured I will not hesitate in regard to it."

"Oh, I know that well enough! It is a jewel of a gurl that ye are, Maggie Moore! I said a sacrifice, but I know well enough that a gurl of your spirit will not consider it as such for a single moment. Shure! you are not the gurl I take you to be, Maggie, if ye let a trifle of money stand betune you and the life and liberty of the man you love."

"A trifle of money!" cried the heiress of Moore, eagerly, new hope springing up in her heart. "Quick! let me know how much is required!"

"I said a trifle in a figurative sinse, me dear, for in truth it is a small fortune that is required, no less than ten thousand pounds."

"Ten thousand pounds!" Maggie repeated, in amazement. "It is indeed a large sum; and how is it to be used?"

"That is where the saycret comes in," explained O'Glory, mysteriously. "O'Brien is safely locked up in a cell down-stairs. Captain Burke holds him firm, but the captain is over-head and ears in debt, and he don't know how to get out; his creditors, too, are pushing him. Now if I could go to the captain quietly and say to him in a way that I know how—" Captain, if O'Brien should, by hook or by crook, manage to escape out of this, it would be ten thousand pounds in your pocket—I lay a hundred guineas ag'in' one that before two days were over Shamus O'Brien would be a free man ag'in, and no wan in this world, yerself, meself and the captain except, would be able to tell how the escape was managed."

"But, can you trust the captain?"

"Faix, not a copper piece of the ten thousand pound would he get until O'Brien was safe in the hills where he could laugh a whole regiment of red-coats to scorn."

"Willingly—gladly will I give the money; prepare the check at once and I will sign it the moment O'Brien is at liberty."

The chances seemed good now that Burke would win his stake.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANOTHER SUITOR.

ON the day after the night which had witnessed the capture of the English lieutenant by the Boys of the Mountain, the Goose-girl, busily engaged in the meadow hard-by her cottage attending to the wants of her feathered friends, caught sight of O'Glory's clerk, the astute Mister Mickey Feakle, coming across the bogs. And as he was heading directly toward her, Kitty began to suspect that he was coming expressly to see her.

Now this was a source of wonder to Kitty, for she and the old lawyer's clerk were not on the best of terms. Rarely did they meet without a war of words, for the girl looked upon Feakle as a sour, ugly old "blaggard," while he, on his part, regarded the Goose queen as a pert, impudent hussy.

Not the least bit of love was lost between the two, and, as a rule, each avoided the other.

So the girl had good reason to be surprised when she caught sight of the usually morose and ugly Mr. Feakle approaching with a smirking smile upon his unprepossessing countenance.

"The top of the morning to ye, Miss Kathleen!" he exclaimed, with a very elaborate bow, as he came up to the girl. "It is well ye're lookin', and it is well I hope ye are, me jewel."

"No jewel of yours, nor the likes of ye!" Kitty retorted, sharply, not at all impressed with the address nor the smirking civility of the man, whom, in good truth, she utterly detested. "And me name is not Kathleen either, I'll have you to know, and I'll thank ye not to be afther calling me out of me name!"

The speech came sharply and with bitter accent, and Kitty fully expected a harsh reply, for Mickey was noted for having as bad a tongue as any man in the county. Judge then of her amazement when Mr. Feakle, instead of getting angry, only grinned in the most good-natured way in the world.

"Be the Big Rock of Cashel! but it is a foine, able tongue that ye have, me darlint!" he exclaimed, as though he was highly pleased. "Be the piper that played before Moses! I vow I would rather be on good terms wid you than to have ye ag'in' me, for divil a sharper tongue is there in all Connemara than yer own, me jewel!"

"I'm not yer jewel!" cried Kitty, without the slightest sign of abating in her hostility, despite Feakle's conciliatory speech and plausible manner, "and don't be afther putting the soft words on me as though you were fresh from kissing the blarney stone!"

"Be the tail of Father Murphy's big black cat—and by this token that baste knows more than a human—I'd have to be afther kissing half a dozen blarney stones to do justice to such a foine gurl as you are."

The girl grew more and more amazed. What on earth had got into the man to induce him to talk after this fashion?

She looked at Feakle in great curiosity to see if he had been drinking, although the clerk was not in the habit of wasting much money in the shebeens of the neighborhood. Her scrutiny was a fruitless one, for not a sign of drink could be detected in his person.

"And a sinsible gurl ye are, too," he continued. "All the county goes bail on that. As I have often said, and I've always been ready to back me words up, too, ye might look from here to Dublin and not find a colleen to bate ye for wit, or sinse, or good-breeding!"

"Is it drunk or mad ye are, Mickey Feakle, that ye do come here and be after talking like this?" Kitty demanded, in her indignant wonder.

"No, me darlint, I am not drunk, except wid your beauty; nor mad but wid love for yees!" the clerk declared, with an extravagant bow.

At this declaration the Goose-girl completely lost all patience. She began to believe that the man was making game of her, and she grew hot with anger.

"Take yourself out of this, bad luck to you, Mickey Feakle!" she cried, in the outburst of her rage. "I'll not have you come here to be after poking fun at me! Be off wid you about your business and I've me to attend to mine."

"Oh, tare and ounds! won't you be afther hearing a man spake?" he rejoined, with an injured air.

"Do you suppose that I will be after standing here and let you make game of me?"

"Is it me making game of ye?"

"What else are ye doing, ye blathering booby?"

"Be the holy smoke! I niver thought of such a thing! It's in earnest I am, entirely; I think that ye are not only the prettiest but the smartest gurl that there is for miles around, and I've come a dale out of me way this morning just for the sake of having a few words wid yees; it's a bit of advice that I'm afther."

"I'll give you that in a breath—get out and never let me see the sight of your ugly face again!" was the maid's hearty retort.

This was a hard thrust, and for a moment even Feakle with all his assurance was non-plused. He felt his anger rising and he longed to retaliate, but when he reflected how large the stake was for which he was playing, with a great effort he choked down his wrath and grinned good-naturedly in the face of the girl, whom, in his heart, he really longed to take by the throat and half-strangle.

"It is a foine sinse of humor ye have, Kitty, me jewel!" he continued. "But ye can't make me angry, no matter what ye say. I have too high a respect for ye—I may say—and upon me sowl it is the truth! I have too high an admiration for ye, for it is the sweetest, foineest gurl ye are that steps foot in shoe-leather this day in Connemara, and I hope that ye won't be afther taking it amiss when I say that I, Mickey Feakle, love the very ground that ye tread on wid yer illigant brogues!"

The girl, utterly astounded, forgot that she had the power of speech and only stared blankly into the face of the clerk.

"Oh, I mane it," he persisted, after a moment's pause; "I mane every word of it. It is as true as I stand here this minute; I wish I may die if it isn't! I am not so young a man as I was once, I know, but I'm not old yet; I am good for thirty years more and mebbe forty, and whin I am mesilf, wid no care troubling me, I feel as young as a bye of twinty. I have been a careful, saving, prudent man, too, and it is a fine trifle that I have laid by ag'in' old age, and now that I am all ready for it, I think I had better settle down and take a wife."

"A wife!" repeated the Goose-girl.

"Yis, me jewel; a wife. It is a matter that I have long thought of; I have weighed the matter over carefully, as a man ought to do before he takes so important a step, and I came to the conclusion that I might be afther searching all Ireland over widout finding a finer gurl than yerself to make Mrs. Mickey Feakle."

"Oh, sir, you do me too much honor!" and Kitty dropped a low courtesy.

For the moment the clerk, astute as he was, certainly was deceived.

"Oh, I know that ye're not rich!" he went on. "It wasn't riches that I was afther lookin' for whin I fixed my eyes on you, darlint; it was yer own precious self. No, no," he protested, with perfect faith that his suit was progressing favorably. "It wasn't money that I was afther. Thanks be to goodness I have enough for both of us."

"That is very lucky, isn't it?" the girl observed, demurely.

"It might be worse, me jewel; and now, since we understand each other, all you have to do is to name the day and I will speak to Father Malone."

"Ah, but we don't understand each other yet! Don't be afther thinking that I am to be got so 'aisily. Mind you now, you're not the only man in the country that has got eyes in his head—"

"Oh, I know phat you mane!" he interposed; "I know that young thafe of the world Tom Pepper—"

"My husband!"

"Oh, no; I'm not sich a fool as to believe that!" he reassured; "I understand all about that. It was a foine thing on your part to come forward to shield Miss Moore, or Mrs. Shamus O'Brien, to give her the name which no doubt belongs to her."

"And who has been telling you that I didn't spake the truth?"

"Sorra a wan! I wanted no telling, shure! I can see as far into a mill-stone as the man that picked it."

"You are too late, Mister Mickey Feakle!" the Goose-girl announced, decidedly. "There are two ahead of you; Tom Pepper is one and Lieutenant Smithers is another."

The clerk gaped in astonishment, and so surprised was he that for a moment he forgot his customary caution.

"The lieutenant!" he blurted out: "tare and ounds! I wonder if he knows—" and then, suddenly remembering that he was betraying himself, he stopped, abruptly, and in considerable confusion.

But he had said quite enough to excite the girl's suspicions. The words, few as they were, gave her an inkling of the truth. Smithers's suit had perplexed her; Feakle's ardent wooing added to the perplexity; but now she guessed at the truth. The gossips of the neighborhood had always predicted that some of old Sheelan's wealth would one day come to light and the girl, too, firmly believed it. That discovery had been made probably by old O'Glory, for the lawyer was known to have a keen scent in such matters. In some way the news had come to Smithers's knowledge; also to the clerk; and both had set out to gain the golden prize.

"Oho! it is an heiress I am, maybel!" she cried. "But, whether or no, I am not for you, Mister Mickey Feakle. Tell your master that I will talk with him, but I am no dumb baste to be sold to the first bidder!"

Nothing now was left for the clerk but to do Miss Kitty's bidding.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN DUNGEON DARK.

In a dungeon, cold and damp and drear, the prisoner had been cast.

Within that low and dreadful cell the blessed light of day never came, but that the unfortunate wretch who might be unlucky enough to be confined within this terrible hole might not die outright for lack of air, high up in the wall a good-sized pipe ran from the cell to the outer world.

The existence of this pipe was almost unknown to the present generation, for it was a relic of the dark ages, and even O'Glory himself was entirely ignorant of this peculiar means of communication that existed between the cell and the outer air.

Now this old pipe was destined to play a very important part in our ower true tale, as the reader will see anon.

The cell was entirely without furniture, a single bundle of coarse straw cast down in one corner serving the prisoner both as a bed and a seat.

A single hour's confinement in such a terrible grave-like den was fully equal to a week's detention in a modern, well-lighted prison, even to a strong, stalwart man, and had not O'Brien bore within his breast one of the stoutest of hearts he must have succumbed speedily to the awful terrors of his prison-house.

Dooney MacDarrow had been intrusted with the care of the prisoner, for Burke conjectured rightly that, after what had passed between the process-server and the Bold Boys of the Mountains, O'Brien's keeping could not be intrusted to a more vigilant or earnest foe.

Dooney, accompanied by an old lantern, had come at regular intervals to supply the prisoner with food and water.

"We don't intend to let you starve, me laddy-buck," he had announced to O'Brien, with a ferocious grin upon his ugly face. "We wouldn't be afther denying ourselves the pleasure of seeing you stretch hemp and dance upon nothing, for the world. Oh, it's a raree show it will be, the day of your hanging!"

"It is well for you that the 'darbies' are on my wrists," the prisoner had remarked, referring to the massive handcuffs that fettered his wrists, "or else, Mr. Dooney MacDarrow, I would spare the hangman a job in your case."

And the process-server—whose bones had not yet forgotten the drubbing which they had received at the hands of the outlaw, stepped back in alarm.

"You'll not see me hang, yer murdering villain, ye!" Dooney retorted, savagely. "Ye will not live to see me hanged! the rope is not spun that will choke me!"

"Well, I guess that there is a good-deal of truth, in that," O'Brien admitted, carelessly. "It is not likely that you will die on the rope. Some desperate boy will save the hangman the trouble of stringing you up. Your doom will be to die with a charge of buckshot in your head, shot from behind a hedge."

Dooney snarled out an angry reply and withdrew, feeling decidedly uncomfortable; he had a grim presentiment of the truth of the prisoner's prophecy.

He had escaped so far without any more serious damage than bruised bones, but his life had been at the mercy of the men whom he had so cruelly persecuted, and the day might come when some of his victims would feel inclined to push matters to extremities.

The prisoner had been placed in the oldest and strongest cell beneath the hall, so that all attempts at escape or rescue would come to naught; but, by so doing the captors unwittingly had placed him in the very spot where he could hold communication with his friends on the outside of the hall.

Some years before the old lawyer had bought and taken possession of the property, the mansion had been but little better than a deserted heap of ruins, and, as a boy, O'Brien, with his companions, had many a time played in the deserted chambers, and being a bold, fearless lad he had pushed his researches clear into the underground vaults and there had made sundry discoveries, which, at this dreadful pinch in his fortune, seemed likely to be of service to him. He not only knew where he was but all his surroundings, and was not so much cast down as to lose heart or sleep.

So, after the keeper's withdrawal, he dropped upon his couch of straw and was soon fast locked in slumber's chains, but ere long was awakened by the sound of the rusty key turning in the lock of the dungeon door.

The door opened, and the old lawyer appeared, bearing a lantern in his hand, and behind him was the fair form of the heiress, Maggie Moore of Killkerran.

O'Brien leaped at once in joy to his feet, and the instant she beheld him the girl rushed forward and threw herself on his breast in a tumult of happiness.

"Maggie, dear, I cannot clasp my arms around you, because my wrists are fettered by handcuffs, and so, like the handle of a pump, the embracing will have to be all on one side!" He spoke lightly, yet the tones of his voice revealed how deep was the joy that welled up in his heart at the presence of the girl.

"Oh, Shamus, what a dreadful place!" she exclaimed, as she clung to his breast and gazed about her with staring eyes at the dark, dank prison walls.

"It is not a palace; but beggars mustn't be choosers, you know."

"But you will not have to remain here long now; the hour of escape is near at hand."

O'Brien looked at the girl in surprise, then gazed at the old lawyer in a doubtful sort of way. He evidently distrusted O'Glory.

That worthy understood the meaning of the look well enough and he hastened to set himself right.

"It's all true, glory be!" he exclaimed. "I've every word of it as true as that I am standing here this minute!"

"Yes, Shamus; it is as Mr. O'Glory says: soon you will be a free man."

But O'Brien was not satisfied with the assurance.

"Explain, please, how this is to be effected," he said, quietly. "I confess I do not understand it at all. I am in about as close quarters here as a man can well be, and I do not see how I am going to get out. Then, too, Captain Desmond Burke, who holds me prisoner, is not the kind of man likely to relax in his vigilance; and he bears me a deadly hatred, too. I feel quite satisfied that there will not be any chance for me to escape while Desmond Burke is to the fore."

"Oh, Shamus, believe that love is more than a match for hatred!" the lady encouraged.

"All is arranged, all accomplished; this very night with my own hand will I open your prison door and lead you forth to freedom, and then, when you are at liberty again, lose no time in escaping from this unfortunate land. Hasten with all speed across the sea to America that freely extends a welcoming hand to us poor children of old Ireland. I will join you there as soon as I can arrange my affairs. I have confessed all to Mr. O'Glory, who is acting in this matter toward me with all a father's kindness. I have told him of our secret marriage and the birth of our child, our little Shamus; he forgives us for acting in opposition to his will and is now ready to do all in his power to aid us in this, our hour of direst extremity."

"Faith! and I will to the best of my ability!" the old lawyer declared, with an appearance of great honesty. "Shure! if I had only known that you two were so much in earnest about the matter, I wouldn't have been afther laying the weight of a straw in your way; but I thought that your love affair was only a boy and girl's foolishness. I had no idea that yer hearts and souls were set on the match; but, glory be! it is not too late for me to do you a good turn. Be the powers! we'll have Mister Shamus out of this afore he is a day older, and thin the quicker he gets out of the country the better it will be for him—for you—and in fact, for all of us, for of coorse there will be the devil's own ruction kicked up about this escape, and it will not be an aisy thing for any of us to clear our shoulders of it. The government will be furious, do ye mind, for they do be having an idea in their heads that Mister Shamus here is wan

of them Fenians from across the say, and it is a mighty big hape of gould that they would give to be afther putting salt on the tail of such a bird."

"But I do not understand this arrangement at all!" O'Brien persisted; "from what you say it would appear that you have succeeded, in some way, in deceiving the captain, and from what I know of Desmond Burke, I take it that so to do is no easy matter. Explain, if you please."

"That is a clear impossibility!" O'Glory hastened to respond. "It is all right; trust us, and before midnight you shall be free."

"Not a single step will I stir until I know all!" O'Brien replied.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WHISPERING CELL.

"SHURE, Mister O'Brien, you're not in your right sinces when you do be afther saying such a thing as that!" the old lawyer continued. "Phat is your r'ason, and phat do ye mane?"

"I am not satisfied!"

"Not satisfied!" cried O'Glory, like an echo.

"No, sir; not at all satisfied."

"But, Shamus, what do you mean?" the heiress inquired, anxiously. "Surely, you will not refuse to avail yourself of this chance of escape that lies open before you?"

"My dear Maggie, I know, well enough, that you are thoroughly in earnest in the matter, and that you believe you are acting for the best, but I am not so sure in regard to others."

"M'aning me, of coorse, Mister O'Brien!" and O'Glory bristled up. "Upon me word, young man, I am much obliged to you for your politeness. I have forgiven and forgotten the dislike that has existed betune us; I have put meself out of the way to sarve you, and this is the manner in which I am paid. I suppose it sarves me right, and I am a fool for my pains."

"Mr. O'Glory, I am a very frank man, both to foes and friends," Shamus remarked, firmly, "and I have always counted you among the first, and never in the list of the second. Why, then, should you now change front, and entirely without reason? When the leopard changes its spots, or the wolf forgets its cruelty, or the fox its cunning, then will I believe that you will forget the hatred that has always existed between us, and do me a friendly turn."

"But, Shamus, you trust me, do you not?" the heiress asked, in a sweet, pleading voice.

"Trust you!" O'Brien exclaimed, fondly. "Why, my poor girl, I would willingly trust what is dearer than life, my honor, into your keeping; but, what worth are you in craft to these wolves and vultures by whom you are surrounded! None at all! I fear that you are the victim of some deep-laid plot, and not a foot will I stir from this place until I know all the circumstances connected with this proposed escape."

"Oho, by the sowl of me body! it is a foine, acute r'asoner ye are, Mister Shamus O'Brien!" and the old lawyer betrayed his deep disgust. "Faix! the way ye are here, I should think that you would be afther jumping at any chance to get out. No matter what may happen, ye can't be well worse off than ye are now."

"Very true, and yet there is an old proverb about jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire, which, ancient, as it is, lingers still in my memory. If I remain here I know what is before me; a good, fair trial by the English government, and if I can succeed in proving my innocence, which is not the most unlikely thing in the world, I shall not suffer." O'Brien spoke quietly and calmly. "I see, now, that I acted like a madman in not standing my trial in the first place, instead of fleeing from the country like a thief in the night. O'Glory, you cannot deceive me in the least; you are no friend of mine, and never will be; if you could aid me to escape from the trials that surround me by so simple an operation as holding up your little finger, I doubt if you would take the trouble, unless you were sure that you would be well paid for the service. You can easily deceive this simple, loving, trusting girl, but as far as your arts are concerned, I laugh them to scorn; you cannot hoodwink me." Then he addressed the girl: "Maggie, dear wife, tell me the whole story. Never mind what this man says; let me know the truth. Give me to understand why this man, my bitter, mortal enemy for years, now takes so much pains to prove himself my friend."

"I've been converted, maybe!" O'Glory suggested, with a sardonic grin. "Shure! ain't we tould to love our inemies, and if I am a good Christian isn't that phat I ought to be afther doing?"

O'Glory was terribly enraged at the doubt so openly expressed by the captive, and, to do the old lawyer justice, he was really trying to get the prisoner out of the hobble, into which he had fallen, to the best of his power. Of course he had a powerful motive for so acting, and was not all disinterested in his action, as we have already seen.

"Come, the truth, darling; let me know the bargain, if there is a bargain!" O'Brien repeated.

"Faix! and do you give no wan in the world

credit for decency except yerself?" the old man growled.

"Not you, O'Glory, for one," the captive replied, instantly. "You are a lawyer, and I never knew a lawyer yet to give anything to anybody. Vampires don't flourish on air."

"There is a bargain, Shamus dear!" the heiress cried, impulsively, "not with Mr. O'Glory here, to do him justice, although it is through him."

"Oh, he gets his little rake from the other party, then?" O'Brien concluded, sarcastically.

"By me sowl! I get nothing from you!" the angry lawyer retorted.

"Nor will you through me, either; just remember that, will you!" and the prisoner's eyes flashed fire.

"Captain Burke is heavily in debt; he needs money badly; and Mr. O'Glory said that he had no doubt if I would give him a check for ten thousand pounds he would be able to arrange with the captain to wink at your escape."

"Ten thousand pounds! By Jovel they price my liberty highly!" O'Brien declared.

"What care I for the money? I would give twice ten thousand pounds—ten times the amount to save you from harm," was the wife's loving assurance.

"You are a perfect jewel of a woman, Maggie, but these cunning plotters do not intend to keep faith with you!"

"Why do you say the likes of that?" the old lawyer demanded. "Isn't she here in your dungeon conversing wid you? Would she be here if I hadn't the power to twist the captain around me fingers like a lock of hair, thanks to the tin thousand pounds that I held up to dazzle his eyes? Isn't this the key that will unlock those purty bracelets on your wrists?" and O'Glory held up the key of the handcuffs as he spoke. "And hasn't ivery sentry been removed, too, so that whin ye git out of here there's a clear road for ye to the hills, and once there, if ye can't show leg-bail to all the sodgers in the land, thin ye're not the bye that I think ye are!"

"You see, Shamus, you doubted wrongfully; all has been well planned—every preparation made for your escape! Oh, you will not refuse to accept the heaven-born chance?" the lady cried, eagerly.

"Upon my life, O'Glory, I believe that you are acting honestly in this matter!" Shamus confessed. "But come, now, make a clean breast of it: what do you make out of this affair?"

O'Glory saw that he had better tell the truth.

"Troth, I have a wee bit of an interest. The captain owes me a trifle of money."

"Aha! and that is the cat in the meal-tub, eh? When he gets this money he is to pay you?"

"Yis, sur; but all this is to be as saycret as the grave, you know," the old lawyer warned. "It would be the ruin entirely of both the captain and meself if the authorities should get wind of the affair."

"Oh, you needn't trouble yourself to worry about the matter," O'Brien reassured. "You may be willing to cheat the Government but the captain will only cheat you. When is the money to be paid?"

"The moment you are free of the hall," O'Glory answered. "But, phat is the matter? Don't you think that Captain Burke will be as good as his word?"

"To a certain extent, yes; but only to a certain extent. He will wink at my escape from this dungeon in order to gain the money, but because he is almost certain that I will be retaken before I can gain a hiding-place in the hills."

"And how do you know that?" asked the old lawyer, in wonder.

"O'Glory, you are not so well acquainted with your own house as I am, I believe. As a boy I played amid the ruins, long before you spent a fortune to fix them up and put them in habitable shape again. Do you know the old name of this cell?"

"Sorra a bit! 'Deed I niver knew that it had a name."

"Oh, it has one! It is called the *Whispering Cell* and possesses a peculiar property. Go to this east wall here, as I do now, and propound a question, and like the ancient prophets of old the wall will answer you."

The lawyer stared, while the lady listened in amazement.

"Oh, it is dreaming ye are! Phat ye say is a clear impossibility!" O'Glory protested.

"Listen then and be convinced!" Shamus approached the east wall; he stood on tiptoe, placed his face close to the stones, then whistled shrilly.

Back came another whistle like an echo!

"Are you there, oh, spirit of the wall?"

"Faith and I am, Shamus, me bye!" the wall replied.

O'Glory could hardly believe the evidence of his ears.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PROPHET SPEAKS.

THERE was no mistake about it—the voice came distinctly from the wall.

Now O'Glory was a shrewd man of the world;

he had traveled, too, and in his tours abroad had witnessed the performance of some of the most celebrated ventriloquists that the world had ever seen; therefore he jumped to the conclusion that the prisoner was a professor of that art, and so was fooling him.

"Bedad, Mister O'Brien, you are a true Irishman, and you bate a fox for 'cuteness!" he averred; "but I am an Irishman, too, and not a gossoon by long odds, and ye can't pull the wool over my eyes afther this fashion! I know your thrick, and divil a hair can you decave me!"

O'Brien laughed; the idea amused him, for he had perfect faith that the old lawyer was not shrewd enough to guess at once the mystery of the whispering cell.

"Oho! ye may laugh!" O'Glory continued, "but I'm aqual to yees, any way ye may take me!"

"No doubt, no doubt!" Shamus replied, still laughing.

"Ye can't fool me wid yer whispering cell!"

"No! you do not believe in it, then?"

"Do you think that I am a child, or a natural (idiot)?" the old lawyer asked. "Be me sowl, Mister Shamus, I tell ye right to yer face that it is mighty early ye'll have to get up in the morning afore ye'll pull the wool over the eyes of Timothy O'Glory, yer humble servant to command!"

"Oh, I know you of old, sir; your reputation is not unknown; and so you think that I am fooling you?"

"Bedad! I know it! I don't think anything about it at all. I know that ye are fooling me, and I give you credit for mighty little wit for to be thrying such a simple thrick upon me."

"Trick or no trick, it is an honest prophet, O'Glory, and he can tell you some things of which you are in ignorance—that is, if you are dealing fairly in the matter and are not in league with Desmond Burke to rob this lady of ten thousand pounds without bestowing upon her any equivalent for such a sum."

"If she is willing to give it to secure your freedom, where's the harm?"

"Ah, I am afraid that in this matter, as the poet says, you are keeping 'the word of promise to the ear to break it to the hope.' Desmond Burke does not intend that I shall escape."

"Thin he won't finger the tin thousand pounds!" O'Glory protested, resolutely. "By this and by that! I swear to you, Mister Shamus O'Brien, that as I am an honest man, I am acting fairly wid you in this matter. You go scot free from this place before the check goes into his hands."

"A clever bit of jugglery, but I am forewarned and so forearmed."

"Phat do ye mane?" The lawyer was perplexed.

"Ask the prophet!"

"Oh, bad luck to ye!" O'Glory cried, annoyed; "don't be afther fooling wid me! Don't ye think that I am up to ye and yer trick? It is yerself that's sp'aking; and ye do it finely, I will go bail for that! aqual to the chap that I saw in Dublin, at the Royal."

"Ah, you think that I am a ventriloquist?"

"Yis; I belave that is phat they call it."

"That's nonsense, and I will prove it to you. Ask your question of the wall and I will hum a tune all the time. I can't very well speak and hum both at the same time."

The old lawyer looked amazed; this extremely fair offer astonished him.

"And phat will I ask?"

"Suppose I put the questions, and the moment I am through I will furnish the music to accompany the answer of the sibyl. Shall I proceed?"

"If you pl'ase."

"Captain Desmond Burke offers to connive at the escape of Shamus O'Brien, provided he receives the sum of ten thousand pounds the moment that O'Brien is clear of O'Neal Hall," the prisoner said, addressing the words to the wall as before, and then he immediately commenced to hum the old Irish song, written by no one knows who, but which is and ever has been, since the days of '93, dear to the heart of every true Irishman:

"Oh, the Frinch are on the say,
Says the Shan Van Vaigh—
The Frinch are in the bay,
Says the Shan Van Vaigh;
They will be here widout delay,
Says the Shan Van Vaigh—
They'll be here by break o' day,
What'll these poor yeoman do?
Says the Shan Van Vaigh."

No strain in all the world so distasteful to O'Glory's ears as this rebel war-song, which, from the early days, when the struggle against England's power commenced, has always kindled the patriot fire in the breasts of Erin's children. But the grunt of disapproval which came from the lips of the old lawyer was suddenly checked, as the strange voice sounded clear in the dungeon cell:

"Desmond Burke is a black-hearted blaggard," the voice declared, "and the bullet is run that will be afther cuttin' short his thread of life wan of these days. He don't mane to l'ave Shamus O'Brien escape from the net in which he is. He has him on the hook and he manes to play him as the fisherman plays the

salmon until the time is ripe to land him in an English jail."

O'Glory was completely puzzled. It was evident that it was not Shamus O'Brien who spoke this time unless he possessed the faculty never yet owned by mortal man, of speaking in two different voices at the same time.

"Well, Mr. O'Glory, are you satisfied now that this little trick is not done by the aid of ventriloquism?" Shamus asked, quietly enjoying the discomfiture of the lawyer.

"This bangs Bannagher!" O'Glory admitted. "Your thrick is too much for me, and I give it up. But, I am not satisfied that it is as this voice says; I am not satisfied that Burke doesn't mane to keep faith wid me."

"I told you before, O'Glory, it is an honest voice and you can trust it; but, to convince you, I will ask why the captain is doubted."

"Do; that is phat I want, upon me sowl. I tell ye, Captain Desmond Burke had better play fair wid me if he knows phat is good for himself," O'Glory muttered, in a very discontented way.

"Why do you think that the captain intends to break h's word and prove false to his bargain in this matter?" O'Brien demanded, again addressing the wall as before, and then, as before, he commenced to hum an air which was if anything even more distasteful to O'Glory's ears, as a stanch partisan of England, than the song of the Shan Van Vaigh—namely the lay of "The Wearing of the Green":

"Oh, Paddy dear, and did you hear the news that's going round?

The shamrock is forbid by law to grow on Irish ground.

St. Patrick's day no more to keep, its color can't be seen,

For there's a bloody law ag'in' the wearing of the green.

I met wid Napper Tandy and he tuck me by the hand,

How is poor old Ireland, how does she stand?

Oh, she's the most distressful country that ever yet was seen,

They're hanging men and women there for wearing of the green."

"The captain will l'ave O'Brien go free from O'Neal Hall so that he will be able to finger the ten thousand pounds, do ye mind!" said the voice. "But to be free of O'Neal Hall is not to be safe in the hills, by a jugful! Burke has sint to Galway for troops and they are pouring into Connemara as fast as hoss and man can be sint forward. All the cross-roads leading to the hills will be picketed by men on foot and on hoss, so that if Shamus misses a sodger he'll meet a dragoon. Captain Burke l'aves him go free so that he can take his ten thousand pounds, but he feels mighty sartin that O'Brien will be taken before he gets a mile away, the dhirty blaggard!"

"Upon me word, Mister Shamus O'Brien, you are better served than I thought you was!" The old lawyer's astonishment proved his own honesty of purpose, at least.

"You see, Maggie dear, that you would be only throwing away your money to make any bargain with Desmond Burke," O'Brien observed to the girl. "He hates me too bitterly to allow me to escape, although I have no doubt that he is very much in want of money, and the temptation is extremely strong, but by this cunning device of his he hopes both to grasp the money, and then to be enabled to deliver me a prisoner at Dublin Castle."

"Oh, Shamus, you are doomed! What can save you?" the girl moaned.

The question was not addressed to the "spirit" of the wall, but the sharp ears of the sibyl gathered it in.

"God and Ireland, through the brave min who are willing to give blood an' life for the ould sod!" was the startling response.

"Be me sowl, your prophet will be hanged for treason wan of these days," was O'Glory's warning.

There was an affecting parting between the lovers, for, although husband and wife, yet they had enjoyed but little of each other's company, and seemed more like lovers, about whose union there was considerable doubt, than a married pair of over a year's standing, and so the interview terminated.

Maggie retired to her room to pray for the man she loved, while O'Glory hurried off to find the captain, in order to reproach him for having so effectually spoiled as pretty a plan as ever was concocted.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CURSE OF IRELAND.

SMITHERS, of course, had been an eye-witness of the punishment inflicted upon the unfortunate process-server, and although he really pitied the fellow when he saw how well his jacket was being dusted by the blackthorn sticks of the Bould Boys of the Mountain, yet he could not help confessing to himself that the culprit really got but little more than he deserved, for the lieutenant was not ignorant of the many petty acts of oppression the process-server had been guilty of executing upon the unfortunate victims whom a cruel fate flung in his way.

After the punishment was completed and the

flogged man had been hurried out of the glen, the disguised Irishman, who acted as the chief of the party, approached Smithers.

"That is the way we deal wid the dhirty hounds who forget that they are Irishmen and stoop to do the filthy work of the oppressor!" he declared, in menacing tones.

The lieutenant, though, was not in the least alarmed, although a prisoner and apparently helpless in the hands of these wild men. He was not an Irishman but a Briton: he wore, too, Her Majesty's uniform, and he did not believe that the outlaws, desperate as they might be, would dare to bring down upon their heads the wrath of England by attempting actual violence against his person, although they had ventured to kidnap him.

"It is a long lane that has no turning, you know," Smithers answered, complacently. "It is your innings to-night, but that fellow will do his best to square the account the very first chance he gets."

"He may thank his lucky stars that we didn't riddle him wid bullets!" returned the Irishman, savagely. "And we would, too; we would have settled the account for good and all if we hadn't wanted him to carry a message to Desmond Burke."

"My good fellow, you will only have your labor for your pains," Smithers replied. "It isn't of the least bit of use for you to try this sort of thing, you know. Burke will never have it. And he couldn't, you know, if he would, because really, you know, he hasn't got the least bit of a say in the matter. O'Brien is in his hands, of course, but that is a mere matter of form; he only represents a superior authority; he couldn't let him go, you know. There isn't anybody that can let him go. He is in the hands of the law, and he must be tried. He is tied up with a knot that no Alexander can cut with a sword, and so this sort of thing that you have played on me to-night is all rubbish, you know; it won't do you the least bit of good, nor help O'Brien at all."

"Burke can contrive it so that O'Brien can slip through his fingers if he wants to; there is more than wan way to kill a cat. You're a friend of Burke, and when he hears that we have got you tight and fast, it will be mighty odd if he don't move heaven and earth to save you."

"It is no use, my boy, you know; and I don't really believe that he would if he could. I am one of Her Majesty's officers and he would never bring himself to believe that you would dare to harm me."

A sullen murmur went up from the listeners at this cool speech, which plainly showed that they did not relish either the manner nor the matter of the lieutenant's remarks.

"I think that we have showed by phat we have done to-night pretty well phat we dare do; our blood is up, and we have got the bit between our teeth—"

"And, like a runaway horse, to carry out the simile," added the lieutenant, "you will all rush blindly to destruction."

"Faix! we might as well die bucking ag'in' the sodgers, as to be turned out of our cabins and starve to death!" the Irish leader retorted, sullenly.

"True for yees!" exclaimed a single voice from amid the crowd, and then the rest took up the cry.

"Death by the sodger's bagonet and saber rather than starve!"

Smithers shrugged his shoulders. He comprehended that it was merely a waste of breath to attempt to reason with such men.

"I tell ye we are desperate," the Irish leader continued, "and we mane mischief. The worum has turned at last, and now let the heel that has trampled on him look out for itself. If ye think that bekase ye wear a red coat we don't dare to harum ye, ye nivr made a greater mistake in your life, and we tell ye, frank and aisy, that if O'Brien is sent to Dublin there will be a vacancy in your company."

"A chance for a lieutenantancy, eh?" and Smithers never changed countenance in the least.

"Begob! ye've hit it, exactly!"

"Well, there's many a slip between the cup and the lip, and I would be willing to bet a trifle at good odds that you won't carry out your plans to the extent that you think."

"We'll all know before we are many hours older, but ye can depend upon wan thing—your life hangs on Shamus O'Brien's!"

Then the outlaw turned away and entered into conversation with the rest of the band.

The future movements of the party was debated, but in a tone so low that the purport of the conversation did not reach the lieutenant's ears.

Smithers did not trouble himself much to attempt to overhear, for he judged, and rightly, that the conversation had little reference to himself.

After the talk was ended Smithers was again blindfolded and conducted away.

The lieutenant went without demur, as he mentally remarked his captors had such deuced taking ways with them that it was no use to resist.

A short distance from the glen was quite an

extensive cave, a natural formation, not unfrequent in the mountainous parts of Ireland. The mouth of this cave was concealed by bushes and overhanging trees, so that a stranger, not acquainted with the spot, would not have been apt to discover the existence of the place even if he had been warned that it was near at hand.

In this cave the lieutenant was placed, and the bandage was removed from his eyes. A rude sort of bed had been constructed in one corner, and upon this Smithers was placed.

"Better make your peace wid Heaven," the Irish leader advised, "bekase if Captain Burke won't listen to r'ason, upon me sowl ye're not long for this world!"

And after this not particularly consoling observation the disguised men tramped out of the cave.

A gleam of hope came up in the heart of the lieutenant. He was all alone in the dark, and although his hands were securely bound, he nothing doubted but that he would be able to unloose the bonds in some way. Smithers rather prided himself upon his fine white teeth, and for once in his life those useful ivories seemed likely to play an extremely conspicuous part.

But after the hands were free, what then?

He was unarmed; there was a sentinel, doubtless, without the cave, and most certainly that sentry would not be weaponless.

Smithers, though, had already discovered that some good hard sticks had been used in the formation of the bed, and he felt sure that if he succeeded in freeing his hands he could use a cudgel to fight his way to liberty as well as any Irishman that ever swung a blackthorn.

The lieutenant was in no hurry; he allowed plenty of time for the party to depart. Then, too, he reasoned that if he kept as still as a mouse, and so deceived the sentinel upon the outside into the belief that he had gone to sleep, it would be all the better for his purpose.

And so, for a good hour Smithers hardly stirred; not a sound could he hear except his own loud breathing, which seemed to reëcho through the cavern.

"It's a deuced unpleasant situation, and I suppose that I shall have a beastly time in getting out of it," the Englishman muttered, as he rose to a sitting posture, raised his arms and applied his teeth to the difficult task of undoing the knots.

But, no sooner had he commenced operations than he was most disagreeably surprised.

A hoarse voice sounded through the darkness.

"Phat are yees about there? Phat is ye do be afther doin'?"

There was a sentinel in the very cave itself! Smithers was terribly disappointed and correspondingly disgusted. It was clear that with a watcher in the cave his little game would not work.

"Hallo, is there any one here?" he called, hardly able to conceal the annoyance which he felt.

"No wan but meself, Paddy Doolin, but don't be afther moving about so, do ye mind! The captain's orders were that if you thried to get up for to put a couple of slugs into yer."

"Don't be in a hurry to execute that order, I beg!" Smithers adjured. He was, in truth, a trifle uneasy, for such a blundering fellow as his sentry might blaze away at him upon the slightest provocation. "I was only changing my position," he added.

"Don't do it ag'in, or if ye do, do it aisy, an' thin ye won't skeer me. I say, Mister Leftenant, how much does it cost a bye to get across the say to Amerika?"

A long breath came from Smithers's lips; new hope came into his mind, for he saw a motive in the question.

When has Ireland ever struck for liberty without being cursed by a traitor in the camp? And this man—was he a weak vessel to be bought by gold?

CHAPTER XXIX.

A BARGAIN.

SMITHERS hadn't the least idea in the world of course what kind of a fellow the sentinel was, but from his rude, coarse voice, he had jumped at once to the conclusion that he was a fair sample of the average peasant, and so could be easily bought, although it was plain that the men who had placed the fellow to guard him had a different opinion.

Good reason, too, had the Bold Boys of the Mountain to believe that Doolin was stanch to the backbone—that is, if words went for anything, for the sentinel was a man of the loud-mouthed order, and many a time had sworn that, as he had no ties to bind him to earth, he was ready and willing at a moment's notice to lay down his life for old Ireland's sake.

But it is not your bragging, blustering dog that makes the steadfast fight.

The united Irishmen would have pinned their lives on Paddy Doolin's truth, and that was why he had been intrusted with the important task of guarding the prisoner.

"How much does it cost to get across the sea?" observed the lieutenant, reflectively, wishing all the time that there was a light in the cave so that he might be able to see what

kind of a man it was who held, for the time being, his fate—life itself, perhaps—in his hands.

"Yis, that is phat I sed; how much to git to Amerika, d'ye mind."

"Well, about five or ten pounds."

"Five or ten pounds!" and the voice of the speaker expressed both surprise and disappointment, evidently at the largeness of the sum.

"Yes, the passage alone will cost about five pounds, and a man ought to have a pound or two more in his pocket besides."

"Five and two are seven—seven pounds! Musha! it's a dale of money."

"That depends altogether upon the man," the lieutenant replied, carelessly. "Seven pounds now may seem like a fortune to you, but to me it is only a trifle."

"Maybe so," the man said, doubt in the voice, though, "but I've seen a dale of the quality that 'ud look a long time at a pound aven afore they threw it away."

"No doubt about that. But, I say, why do you ask in regard to the cost of getting to America? Have you any idea of going there?"

"Troth! it wouldn't inake much differ if I did!" the fellow answered, with bitter accent. "I haven't five pence to the fore, let alone five pounds."

"But if you had the money, would you go?"

"Would I go?" cried the man in a sort of subdued yell. "Would a duck swim? L'ave somebody put seven pounds, or five pounds aven, in me fist, and see how quick I'd trot on me tin toes to the say! I'll go bail that ye couldn't see me heels for dust!"

"But why do you want to go across the water? Have you friends or relatives in America?"

"Sorra a fri'nd or relative have I in the wide wourld," the man replied, in heavy, sullen tones. "I had a mother wance, only a wee time ago—an ould, helpless, bedridden mother—and bekase I couldn't pay me rint, afther sellin' iv'rything that I had in the wourld to live, a dirthy two pound tin, they turned both of us out into the road to die. The ould woman did die, for she was in no condition to stand such hardship, but she is a saint now in heaven, rest her soul, an' I'm wan of the Bould Byes of the Mountain until the sodgers get hould of me un' I'm either shot or hanged."

Smithers was surprised by the tale. During his brief sojourn in Ireland he had heard of and witnessed many a scene of misery, but his soul was not yet hardened so that he could either witness or listen to such things with indifference.

The passiveness of the man surprised him; he knew that by joining this secret brotherhood he was defying the law; he expected in the end to be either shot or hanged, and, to a certain extent, was indifferent to the fate that awaited him.

"You think, then, that the soldiers will get you in the long run?"

"Shure! Isn't that the way it always do be ending?" the man queried. "Haven't I seen many a bould bye marched off since I was a gossoon? Isn't there always some dirthy thafe of the wourld ready to take the tyrant's dirthy money an' denounce the byes?"

Smithers's hopes fell to zero at this speech; a man so severe on traitors would never surely turn traitor himself.

"Well, yes, now that you put it so strongly, I believe that is the way this sort of thing generally ends," the Englishman managed to say, after a pause. "But I say, since you have got your eyes open, why don't you get out—cut and run?"

"Where will I go—begob! I'd have to be afther putting the say betune me an' the rest of the byes, or they would have me life afore you could crook your little finger."

"That is it, exactly!" Smithers assented. "Go across the sea—go to Amerika; there is a fine chance there for a young man like yourself to become one of the best in the land."

"And where will I get the money? It is aisy to say go, but, as ye have just said, a man must have at laste seven pounds to go wid."

"I can give you the money!"

"Howld yer whist, man! don't spake so loud!" the fellow cautioned.

"I can help you, and will give you ten pounds if you will set me free, and conduct me back to O'Neal Hall again."

"It would be as much as my life was worth if the byes laid hould on me, afther it," the fellow observed, in a thoughtful sort of way.

"Yes, but you will not be idiot enough to stay around here and let the boys get hold of you afther you get my ten pounds in your pocket. You can be off at once; you will have five or ten hours' start, and afther you get to Galway you can sail at once for Cork, and there get a steamer. The boys will never suspect that you will give leg-bail in such a fashion, and while they are searching for you high and low in the neighborhood here, you will be on the sea."

The lieutenant could hear the heavy breathings of the man, coming out clear and distinct, as he pictured the process of the escape—as he described the journey which the poor ignorant peasant all his life had desired to make.

To the average Irish peasant the golden land,

Amerika—"free Amerika across the say,"—is the Ultima Thule of their earthly hopes.

"I'll do it—I'll risk it, although I do be taken an' the byes tear the heart from out me breast!" he cried, in a hoarse voice. And then, a new idea suddenly occurred to the man. "But, see here, lieutenant dear, will ye be afther keeping faith wid me?" he asked, suspiciously. "Tin pounds is a dale of money. Maybe afther ye're safe at the Hall, ye won't want to be afther giving it to me?"

"There is just about ten pounds in my wallet, now," the lieutenant replied. "Help yourself to it before we start, and then you will be easy upon that score. You perceive I am willing to trust you, although you are suspicious of me."

"Upon me wourd, ye are a gintleman, lieutenant, although ye are an Englishman—a sodger, an' wear a red coat!" exclaimed the man, touched by the confidence reposed in him. "I'm not a rogue, nor a blaggard, although I do go ag'in' the byes in this, but, phat is the differ? Shure! I know Captain Burke won't be afther giving Shamus O'Brien up, and, maybe, the byes, in their rage, might do you a mischief, for the devil's in them now, whin their blood is up. It will do thim no harum, for you'll give me yer wourd, lieutenant, dear, won't ye, that ye'll bear the poor byes no malice bek'ase they tried a plan to set O'Brien free?"

"No; I will consider the account settled, if you will get me back safe to O'Neal Hall."

"It is a bargain, and we'll set out at once; the byes won't be back here until morning, for they have gone quite a distance to give a thafe of an agent a gintle warning, bad 'cess to him! It's thim fellows that do be afther makin' all the trouble: they screw the tenant down to the last penny, so as to stand well wid the landlord."

So the compact was made, and the Irishman at once proceeded to carry out his part of it.

Like a cat, he seemed to have the faculty of seeing in the dark, for he came over to Smithers without hesitation, and proceeded to help him to his feet. Then he unbound his arms, an operation which afforded a great deal of relief to the lieutenant, who did not admire at all the manner in which he had been trussed up, like a turkey ready for roasting.

After the guard freed Smithers from his bonds, he took him by the hand and conducted him out of the cave.

The lieutenant handed over the money, although the guide protested that he was willing to trust the gentleman, but Smithers insisted upon his taking it then.

The man was as good as his word, for he conducted the officer safely to O'Neal Hall, and then, remarking—"maybe I will see you in Amerika wan of these days," he set off at the top of his speed. It was a race for life, now, and Paddy Doolin never breathed freely until he stood on the deck of an ocean steamer and saw the green hills of Erin fading away in the distance.

Burke made but one remark:

"Their first trick has failed; what will they try next, I wonder?"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GOOSE-GIRL'S FORTUNE.

O'GLORY was very much put out by the failure of his cunningly-contrived scheme, and he got very little satisfaction from Burke. The captain had listened patiently to his recital of the particulars of the interview with the unrepentant rebel, and had smiled sardonically when, at the close of the tale, the old lawyer upbraided him for not keeping faith.

"O'Glory, you are a difficult man to suit," the captain said. "I didn't agree to see O'Brien safe out of the country."

"True for ye, I know that; but if ye had only been afther laving yer divilish troops quiet, we would have fingered the money and thim ye could have bagged yer bird."

"Ah, yes; there isn't any doubt about that, but if O'Brien once gets safely away and gains the shelter of the hills, how much chance will I stand of recapturing him, even though backed by a thousand men?"

"True for ye, captain," the old man admitted, and with a tinge of sadness in his voice. "I presume that if the wild divil had got free we would never be afther catching sight of his face again; but it's a shame to miss the chance of fingerin' the tin thousand pounds."

"We cannot have everything that we want, in this world," Burke consoled, in a very philosophical way. And then he proceeded to question O'Glory in regard to the mysterious voice which he had heard in the cell of the prisoner.

"And who knows," the captain remarked, afther they had discussed the matter, "but what there may be a secret passage leading from the vaults to the open country? These old houses were constructed with all sorts of rat-holes underneath; so, as a measure of precaution, I think that the quicker we get Mr. Shamus O'Brien out of his underground quarters and put him somewhere else the better."

In this the lawyer fully agreed; it was just possible that a secret passage existed; that the secret was known to the United Irishmen, and that a favorable opportunity only was waited for; so to make assurance doubly sure, O'Brien

was removed to a strong room right next to the roof of the old hall.

"Upon me wourd ye'll find no spirit of the wall here, Mister O'Brien," the lawyer assured, afther the transfer was made.

The rebel laughed: "There are spirits of air as well as of earth."

"Neither wan will serve ye here, do ye mind?" And then O'Glory departed; and from O'Neal Hall went straight to the cottage of the Goose-girl.

The messenger whom he had dispatched—the wily Mr. Mickey Feakle, who, in attending to his master's affairs, had attempted to do a stroke of business on his own hook—had not brought back a very favorable account of his reception by Miss Kitty Sheelan.

The Goose-girl, according to his statement, had proved utterly intractable. He had delicately paved the way for the proposition which O'Glory had instructed him to make, but the girl would not listen at all. Whether she meant yes or no, for the life of him he couldn't tell, and he wound up the recital by stating that he had been obliged to retreat from the cottage in hot haste, for the girl, provoked at his persistency, had opened the door of the goose-pen and shoed all the feathered bipeds at him in a way that was truly alarming.

O'Glory, afther listening to the long rigmarole in impatience and anger, cursed the clerk for a blundering, thick-headed idiot, and declared that he would see the girl himself; at which the unlucky Mr. Feakle slunk away in a mighty "onaisy" state of mind, for he was mortally "afraid" that Kitty would inform O'Glory how he had come a-wooing and by so doing reveal his treachery to his master.

The lawyer knocked at the door of the cottage and afther waiting a few moments knocked again; there being no signs of life within.

A minute or so elapsed, and the lawyer beginning to fear that the girl was out, was just upon the point of knocking again when Kitty's voice from within asked, "who was there?"

Upon the lawyer declaring his name, and furthermore stating that he had important business with her, the door was opened—it had been barred upon the inside—and the Goose-girl appearing, invited the old gentleman to walk in and be seated.

There were pen, ink and paper upon the table; so the lawyer judged that, at the time of his first summons, the girl had been deep in the throes of composition, which accounted for the delay in admitting him.

O'Glory took the chair proffered him and sitting down looked benignantly upon the maid. The lawyer was a very pleasant old gentleman when he chose to be.

"Sit down, me child; sit down and make yer-self aisy," he encouraged. "It is something very important that I have to communicate to ye."

The girl dropped a courtesy and took a chair. "It may not be unbeknown to ye, Miss Sheelan, that I do be afther taking a high degree of interest in ye."

"Yes, sir, and thank you kindly," she answered. "I know that you always had a good word for me, and used to be always chucking me under the chin and saying that I was a purty little devil, and that it was a great pity I couldn't find a better place than to be afther tending a lot of geese."

The lawyer coughed; this reference to the days when he had attempted to play the sweetheart to the girl, despite the difference in their years and stations, rather embarrassed him.

"Oh, yes," she continued, warming up with the subject; "many is the time that I remember when you have said to me that, if I would only be sensible and know what was good for me, you would get me a snug place at the Hall where I would have mighty little to do, and plenty of time to do it in. Oh, sure! you were always the kind, good gentleman, and although I didn't care to go into service, I thank you for the offer, all the same."

Was the girl making game of him? She had always rejected his advances with the utmost scorn and contempt, and more than once had sent him away in hot haste with a particularly large flea in his ear. What was she driving at now?

"Yis, yis, but that is all over now, you know!" he exclaimed, hastily. "I was only trying ye, me dear."

"Of course. I know that, and that is the reason why I didn't tell your wife. Oh! wouldn't the madam have made it warm for you?"

O'Glory moved uneasily in his seat; the bare thoughts of such a thing made him shudder.

"Niver mind that; l'ave that alone. I've come to talk to ye about business now. It is yer good that I have at heart, me child, and maybe it's a trifle of money that I can put in your way."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANOTHER FAILURE.

THE Goose-girl looked at her visitor with an arch and cunning smile upon her pretty face, and there was a peculiar expression—a glimmer in

her eyes, that O'Glory didn't like at all. He scented trouble.

"Yis, my dear; I think that I can be afther putting a trifle of money in yer way," he repeated, rubbing his hands together softly, and beaming upon the girl in his warmest manner.

"A trifle of money is good, and the bigger the trifle the better," the girl suggested, in an extremely careless way, not at all impressed with wonder at the announcement.

"And, me child, although I say it, who shouldn't, maybe, I am the only man in the wourld who can give you this trifle of money."

"Oh, Mr. O'Glory, you are so rich that of course you can afford to be generous if you wish to, but it is so good of you to give some of your money to a poor girl like myself; I am sure I don't know what I will do to show my gratitude."

Again the old legal fox was embarrassed; the simplicity of the girl bothered him. It was his game to enter into as little explanation as possible, but it was necessary to recall the girl from the false scent upon which she was hastening.

"Ahem, me dear child, it is not me own money that I am going to bestow upon yees."

"Not your own money?"

"No, me dear, but it is a trifle that I think ye are entitled to; I am not shure of it, ye know, bek'ase it all comes from the law, and the law is a mighty unsartin thing."

"Oh, then, I may not get it after all?"

"True for yees," and the lawyer shook his head in a doleful sort of way. "As I obsarved before, the law is very uncertain, but I know the law as well as any man in Ireland, and if there is a man living upon this earth to-day who can get this money for yees, it is meself who is that man."

"You are very kind, indeed, to take all this trouble, and when you know, too, that I am not able to pay you anything," and, as she spoke, she cast a speaking glance at the old fellow's face, which did not escape his notice, and which puzzled him exceedingly.

"Of coorse, if I don't succeed in getting anything for yees, thin I will only have me trouble for me pains, but if I am lucky enough to get a trifle for yees—a hundred pounds, maybe—" and the lawyer paused to observe the effect of this announcement, for a hundred pounds was a small fortune to a girl situated as she was, but he was disappointed. Instead of an outburst of amazement, as he had confidently expected, she only smiled, and nodded her head as a signal for him to go on.

"Yis, me dear, a hundred pounds," he continued. "Maybe two hundred, if the law hasn't ate it all up."

"Why, I shall be quite rich, won't I? and I sha'n't have to tend the geese any more!" in the most commonplace and matter-of-fact tone possible.

"Tind the geese!" cried O'Glory; "you would be a goose yourself if you did."

"Ah, now I understand why Mr. Feakle wanted to marry me. Sharp fellow, isn't he?"

The lawyer glared at this discovery of the meditated treachery of his clerk.

"The blaggard! that was his game, was it?" he cried, in a passion.

"Oh, yes; he wouldn't take no for an answer until I set the geese at him, but the old gander made him take to his heels in a twinkling. Of coorse, if there is any chance of my getting a hundred pounds, I should be quite a catch for Mr. Mickey Feakle, but what I don't understand is the other."

"The other?" exclaimed O'Glory, in amazement; "phat other—phat do you mane?"

"Why, the lieutenant!"

"The lieutenant?"

"Yes, Lieutenant Smithers; he was here, the other day, and made the most ferocious love to me, and I don't understand that at all," observed the girl, with the most perfect simplicity, which, if not natural, was extremely well assumed.

"The lieutenant was afther ye?" and then into the mind of the lawyer flashed the remembrance of the spot where he had revealed the secret of the Goose-girl's fortune to his clerk. Right above his head were the windows of the apartment occupied by Smithers. O'Glory remembered, too, that he had not been particularly careful in regard to the tone of voice in which he had spoken, and now that the news of the soldier's suit had been made known to him, he felt morally certain that Smithers had been sitting by one of the windows above, and so, by accident, had overheard the whole conversation.

The old leech groaned in secret; how could he hope to succeed in his plan if all the details upon which the scheme was based were known to others?

"It is really a mystery," the Goose-girl continued. "I can understand that if Mickey Feakle found out there was one or two hundred pounds coming to me, it would be a very strong inducement for him to come sweet-hearting to me, but with the lieutenant—the case is altogether different. If it was ten or twenty thousand pounds now—" and again the girl favored the lawyer with a sly look.

It was much as O'Glory could do to keep from groaning outright; he felt positively certain that all the fat was in the fire, metaphorically speaking, for he guessed that these two suitors, coming in hot haste to woo, had excited the suspicions of the girl, and had led her to believe that the great fortune which rumor had always declared that old Michael Sheelan had possessed had at last come to light.

The gossips of the neighborhood had never wavered in their belief that the old miser had died "as rich as a Jew," and that, sooner or later, the money would be discovered, and the discovery would make the Goose-girl the richest lady in Connemara. O'Glory resolved to learn the worst.

"The Englishman is half-cracked, I think, and I wouldn't like to go bail for anything that he might be afther doing. It's a foine, handsome girl ye are, and, maybe, it was strucked by yer beauty he was. But now, Kitty, darlint, to come down to sober business, suppose I get this money for yees phat will ye be afther giving me for me trouble?"

"Oh, it isn't for the likes of a poor girl like me to say," she replied. "It is for you to set the price; how much, now?"

"I will be r'asonable wid ye, seeing that it is you, Kitty, a colleen that I've always had a soft spot in me heart for. Of coorse, a man like meself must be paid for me trouble, and, as I am the only man that can be afther getting you the money, and Heaven knows it may be only a wee bit of a trifle after all—not over fifty pounds, maybe, suppose we say that I'm to have a quarter of all I get for ye for me trouble?"

"Suppose it should be twenty thousand pounds or more, what then?" she asked, shrewdly.

"Oh, but it isn't likely to be any such an amount!" he exclaimed, hastily, and with a dim apprehension that this second little game of his was destined to fail as completely as the first one had done.

"Suppose we say a quarter if it is two hundred pounds and a hundred pound clear if the amount is over two hundred no matter how much it may be!"

The lawyer saw at once that he had "caught a Tartar," and that Kitty Sheelan had not been dealing in geese all her life for nothing.

"Oh, I couldn't do it—I couldn't 'bate a penny; it's a quarter I must have or nothing!"

"It will be nothing then!" cried a rich, manly voice, and Tom Pepper made his appearance from the closet where he had taken refuge upon the appearance of the caller.

"Mr. O'Glory, I have the honor to be your servant to command," and he made the lawyer, who had started to his feet in a rage, a polite bow, which the angry man did not take the least notice of, so disgusted was he at the turn affairs had taken.

"The fact is, Mr. O'Glory, we think we can get on in this little matter without your aid. My wife—that is to be—and a bright blush crept into Kitty's cheeks at the expression, "is no doubt the heir to all the estate left by her father, the late Michael Sheelan. In some way you have found out that there is an estate. I presume you will have no objection to impart the precious information to me."

"I'll see you hanged first!" snarled the angry man.

"Precisely—precisely what I expected!" and Tom was as cool as a cucumber, "and so I have drawn up an advertisement in regard to the Sheelan estate—I had just finished when you knocked—which I shall cause to be inserted in all the principal newspapers in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Old Boy will be in it if that don't put me on the track of the money."

O'Glory waited to hear no more, but with a round of curses rushed from the cottage.

Fate itself was in arms against O'Glory.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE NEXT MOVE.

DESMOND BURKE was not half so much disappointed at the failure of the cunning scheme, which he and the old lawyer had contrived between them, as O'Glory, although, if it had been successful, he would have received ten thousand pounds while the lawyer would have got but two.

But Captain Burke, of late years, had become a fatalist; luck, fate was against him, and strive how he might the current seemed always to set in opposition to his will.

In almost everything he did ill-luck seemed to attend him. If he backed the favorite at the races, some dark horse was sure to win, but if, on the contrary, he backed the field against the favorite, then the gallant animal at the top of the betting was certain to win in a canter.

And so convinced was he that luck was against him that at last, in mockery, he used to counsel his friends, if they wished to win, to bet exactly opposite to what he did.

One gleam of good fortune only had shone upon his pathway for quite a long time, and that was the capture of Shamus O'Brien.

In this instance, for a wonder, fate forgot to frown upon him. "Fortune was asleep, like an idle jade!" he commented, with bitter satisfaction, when he referred to the affair, "or else it would never have happened."

But, despite this saying, he began secretly to hope, gambler-like, that fate had grown tired of persecuting him, and that his luck had turned. The complete failure of his scheme, though, by means of

which he hoped to finger ten thousand pounds of Miss Maggie Moore's money, rather put him out of conceit with this idea, so now it was time to change his tactics.

He had ordered the troops to remain at a distance from the Hall, covering all the cross-roads in the direction of the hills so as to intercept the prisoner, after his release, in his anticipated flight in that direction, but now everything must be changed.

Smithers's recital of what he had seen in the glen had convinced Burke that the Irishmen were desperate and determined enough to make an attack upon the very Hall itself if they saw no other way to accomplish the purpose that they had in view—the release of the prisoner.

As near as the lieutenant could calculate, there were from thirty to fifty men in the gang, and, in his opinion, nearer to fifty than to thirty. They were all pretty well armed, and if well led could hardly fail in securing the safety of the captive by a resolute and determined attack upon the old mansion.

Burke had dispatched messengers at once to summon the troops to his rescue, for he was really afraid that he would not be able to hold the post against a resolute attack with the small force at his hand.

Smithers shared in this opinion, for, as he expressed it:

"This deuced old barracks has got so many wings, and so many ways of getting into it and out of it, that I really believe it would take a hundred men to hold it with any hope of success against anything of a force, you know."

Another point of vantage possessed the peasants. There were at least a dozen men in the ranks well acquainted with every nook and passage in the old Hall, and there was little doubt in Desmond's mind that all the peasants in the neighborhood were in league, more or less, with the Bould Boys of the Mountain. Hence, with such a rambling old building, while the few soldiers at the captain's command were resisting an attack at a given point, there were five or six others through which entrance could be gained.

It was near nightfall before the messengers were dispatched to order the detachments of troops to hurry to the relief of the Hall, and if each and every one of them used the utmost speed and were not delayed on the road, it would surely be midnight before the nearest company could arrive at the Hall, and until midnight some weary hours must pass away.

The captain and Smithers paced up and down in front of the mansion upon the smooth turf in the "gloaming hour."

The faces of both were sober, for they fully understood the extent of their peril.

Smithers was no alarmist, and when he had quietly said that the Bould Boys of the Mountain were as desperate and dogged a set of rascals as he had ever met with, and that in his mind there was no doubt, if they were properly led, they would fight with the ferocity of bull-dogs, Burke knew he had not exaggerated the matter.

And Desmond Burke, too, as well as any man who had ever trodden Irish soil, knew what a blood-thirsty set of desperadoes these same hard-working, simple, honest peasants were when goaded on by personal wrongs to bloody deeds.

"By Jove, old boy!" he observed to the lieutenant, as they paced up and down, "this is a deuced awkward situation. We are a good deal like pirates fighting with a halter round our necks, if they do attack the Hall to-night. We shall hurt some of them in the first of it, sure, and if they do succeed in overpowering us in the end, which I confess doesn't seem very unlikely, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that, in their mad rage, hot as they will be with the blood and smoke of the conflict, we shall all be slaughtered on the spot."

"By Jove! there is a fine thing to go in for, isn't it now? But, I say, as the position is untenable suppose we evacuate it—retreat with our prisoner, you know," was Smithers's suggestion.

"Impossible to do it successfully; we should be detected and cut off before we had gone a mile. It is better to stick to the protection of the walls than to be cut off in the opening."

"Of two dilemmas choose the least; now in this case, if any one would show me which was the least, I'd know better how to act."

"There are only two chances for us," Burke answered.

"Yes, that is exactly what I said, but I object to both of them. For a soldier to fall in battle is all right; there's the glory of the thing; but, to be cut off in a deuced skirmish with a deuced lot of ragged fellows, armed with all sorts of weapons—good heavens, old boy! the very thought is perfectly disgusting."

"I'm talking of two chances for life, not for death."

"Deuced sight more agreeable, you know."

"In the first place, the moon is coming up," and the captain pointed to where "pale Luna, sweet mistress of the night," was rising slowly above the horizon, beating back the envious clouds of the ebon eve with her soft, silvery rays.

"Yas, it will give us light to see our own throats cut," suggested Smithers; "it will be some consolation to be able to see how the little operation is performed."

"The moon will give us light so that we can watch the movements of the assailants as they come up to the attack, and if we can see what they are doing perhaps we may be able to beat them off. That is chance number one."

"Deuced small one!" Smithers believed. "It is a good deal like going in for a lottery, you know; a man stands about as good a chance to be struck by lightning as he does to win anything."

"Very true, but it is a chance; then number two: if we cannot succeed in repulsing the assailants we may be able to keep them in check until midnight; then our reinforcements will begin to come up and the game is our own. Hence time must be gained by every means in our power. You know the pickets are out."

Smithers nodded.

"Well, when the alarm is given that the rascals are advancing, we will fall back to the house. We will let them marshal their force upon the lawn here, which they will be pretty sure to do, for these

fellows love to ape a military display; then, from one of the windows, I will sound a parley with them."

"I see, by Jove! Deuced good idea! you will talk to them and talk against time."

"You have hit it, exactly. First, I will ask them what they want; express surprise at the gathering; warn them to disperse, that they are breaking the law, and all that sort of thing; then, when they demand the prisoner, as they surely will, I will ask time to consult you and O'Glory."

"Yes, but I say, by the way," interrupted Smithers, "has the old rascal"—by this affectionate term he referred to his host—"any idea of this attack?"

"Not the least in the world, and he undoubtedly will be scared out of his wits when he finds that his mansion, of which he boasts so much, is exposed to the danger of attack and pillage."

Bang! went a musket in the park near by.

It was the signal that danger was near.

The Bould Boys of the Mountain were advancing.

The pickets came in, in hot haste, and one and all told the same story; shadowy forms were advancing in all directions.

The siege of O'Neal Hall had begun!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN ADVANCE IN FORCE.

ALL was bustle and confusion within the mansion; the sound of the musket-shot had alarmed every inmate of the Hall.

O'Glory and his wife came rushing down from their private apartment and met Burke and the rest as they came retreating into the house, in hot haste.

"Tare and 'ounds!" cried the lawyer, wonderfully excited; "phat's the matter? phat the devil is the meaning of that gun?"

"Is anybody kilt?" yelled the madam, at the top of her voice; "is there anybody kilt? For the love of Heaven, will nobody tell me and not l'ave me to die wid fright? Mr. O'Glory, if ye have got the courage of a hare—which, by the same token, I don't think ye have—will ye run out and see phat is to the fore?"

But the soldiers being occupied in closing and barring the great front door of the mansion, by Burke's command, effectually prevented any such action on the part of O'Glory.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear madam," the captain hastened to say; "no one injured as yet."

"Oh, glory be!" cried Mrs. O'Glory, not in the least pacified; "but you mane that some one is likely to be hurted. Phat is it? Who's going to be kilt?"

"No one, I hope, at present," responded Burke, still busy with superintending the fastening of the door.

"But, captain, dear, who fired that shot?" the old lawyer asked, understanding of course from the hasty movements of the soldiers that some great danger threatened.

"It was fired by one of my pickets at a skulking figure in the dark."

"Upon my life, captain, I believe there was fifty of them creeping in on me!" the soldier averred—he whose musket had sounded the alarm.

"Fifty!" cried O'Glory.

"Fifty phat? Why don't ye be afther sp'aking out and not l'ave us to die wid fear?" the lawyer's wife demanded.

"Fifty of your esteemed countrymen, Mrs. O'Glory," Burke answered.

"An' phat do they be afther wanting here?" the lady asked, in blank amazement. "Shure, they do have no call to come here, wan or fifty! Bad luck to them; they know that they are not welkum!"

"And for that reason, I presume, they have equipped themselves with various weapons, guns, swords, pistols, bill-hooks, scythes, home-made pikes and other implements of war."

"Yes, looks as if they intended to win a welcome for themselves," Smithers remarked.

For the first time the truth of the matter flashed upon the lawyer and his wife.

"Holy saints!" cried O'Glory, almost stupefied by the intelligence; "you don't mane to say that the byes are 'up,' and that they meditate an attack upon the Hall?"

"Oh, the blaggards—the murdering thaves of the world!" screamed Mrs. O'Glory. "Oh, captain dear, they will never dare! Shure! they know that they will be bate and hanged, as they ought to be, ivery mother's son of them!"

"My dear Mr. and Mrs. O'Glory, it is just as well to look the truth in the face," Burke responded, cooler even than usual. "There isn't the least doubt in the world that the peasants are 'up'; and they mean mischief, too. Shamus O'Brien is held a prisoner here, and it is their purpose to release him."

"Don't you do it, captain!" yelled Mrs. O'Glory, terribly enraged at the bare thought of the prisoner escaping the doom which long ago she had predicted for him. "The mane, dirty scuts! Shure! they will never dare to come to the house of wan of the quality wid arms in their hands!"

"My dear madam, they have come, and they mean mischief. It is more than probable that they know we have only a slender guard, and they hope to either frighten or force us into a compliance with their demands."

"But you won't do it—you won't give Jim O'Brien up?" the lawyer's wife demanded, for the very thought even of such a thing was to her as gall and wormwood.

"No, madam; we will not give him up," Burke replied, firmly. And then, the door being firmly secured, he gave orders to bring all the furniture near at hand and pile it up in the entry so as to form a barricade in the event of the door being forced.

Mrs. O'Glory listened in horror to the order and instantly began to remonstrate against it with remarkable vigor.

"Oh, captain darlint! the illigant furniture!" she cried. "It's a dale of money it cost! Shure! the byes will never dare to think of breaking in the dure? It would be a hanging matter for them to do that!"

"Madam, I am really sorry, but it is my duty to defend this post while I have a man left, and by every means in my power. I have only a handful of soldiers here against a mob—fifty to a hundred men. They are desperate and determined rascals, and un-

doubtedly they will attempt to storm the house if we refuse to give up the prisoner."

By this time O'Glory had got terribly alarmed; he knew how bloodthirsty and destructive a mob of his countrymen usually became if success crowned their efforts, so he feared greatly for the safety of his mansion, for if there were fifty or a hundred men in the attacking force it was perfectly plain to him that it would be clearly impossible for the soldiers to hold the house, and if the mob once forced their way into it, in search of the prisoner, good-by to house, furniture and all valuables, for in the mad fury of triumph, particularly as he was known to be an adherent of the government, it was more than likely that when the conquering band quitted the Hall, they would leave naught but a mass of smoking ruins behind them; dearly as both the lawyer and his wife loved the English cause, yet neither one of them was prepared for such a sacrifice as this.

"Captain, dear, ye will never be able to keep them out!" O'Glory cried, in great apprehension; "ye will never be able to hould the house again! them; hadn't ye better l'ave O'Brien go this time? Shure! ye will be able to lay hould of him ag'in."

"I am sorry, Mr. O'Glory, that I cannot accede to your request; but it is my duty to hold O'Brien, and I shall do so if this house proves the funeral pile of myself and all who are in it."

The madam set up a howl at this, and the old lawyer was so exasperated that he was just about to blurt out that Burke was not so firm about holding the outlaw when he thought he was going to make ten thousand pounds by letting him go, but a prudent second thought restrained him, so he contented himself with inquiring of the captain if he thought that the "ribils," as he termed them, would surely capture the house.

"No, I do not think so, and if we can hold out until midnight my reinforcements will come; then we will either kill or jail all of these fellows that do not have the good fortune to get away. We want time; that is all. I will parley with them first and then you can try your hand. If we can only hold them off with fair words until the troops come up we can cut them all to pieces."

Both husband and wife listened in sore dismay to this assurance, which, to their minds, promised nothing at all. There were a good three hours until midnight, and they knew the temper of the peasantry too well to hope to keep them from the prey within their grasp by mere words; so, sullen and discontented, they withdrew to the second floor and repaired to the drawing-room, the windows of which commanded a view of the grounds in front of the house where the marauders were assembled—the moon, now high in the heavens, giving ample light for the exciting events which seemed near at hand.

The captain had the furniture brought out and with it constructed a complete barricade across the entry.

"If these fellows don't manage to overpower us by an attack from half a dozen different points at the same time, we will give them a tougher fight than they anticipate, I think," Burke observed, grimly, as he posted his slender force with good judgment, and then, accompanied by Smithers and three of the best marksmen in the command, took his way up-stairs to the balcony, access to which could be had from the drawing-room.

As the mustering Irishmen, gathering under the shelter of the trees in the park, a hundred yards or so distant from the balcony, beheld the glitter of the weapons as the soldiers stepped out upon the balcony, a sort of hoarse, subdued yell escaped from their throats.

"Sounds like the wild animals in the Zoo's gardens, when they see the man with the meat coming," Smithers remarked.

"We are not their meat yet," Burke replied, quietly.

The lawyer and his wife, peering over the shoulders of the soldiers, looked with dismay upon the dark mass gathered under the old trees, the bright rays of the moon playing now and then upon the naked weapons which the insurgents carried in their hands.

"These fellows are in earnest, by Jove!" Smithers declared, and he peered curiously at the throng to see if he could recognize in it any of the men who had held him prisoner.

"Oh, that old Father Time would grease the wheels of his chariot, and that twelve o'clock was near!" the captain muttered.

Then, upon the air rose a loud and savage yell, and the insurgents brandished their weapons.

Was this the signal for an attack? The soldiers grasped their guns.

But, out stepped a brawny man, his face disguised with black crape, and then it was plain that a parley was desired.

Talk—time! That was exactly what Burke wanted.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

O'GLORY TRIES HIS HAND.

In his hand the man carried a "bit of a stick" to which a white handkerchief was tied.

Waving his flag of truce he advanced boldly, apparently confident in the protection of the white flag, until he came within a hundred feet of the balcony upon which the group stood; then he halted.

Smithers had already recognized the man. It was the same fellow who had carried on the conversation with him in the glen—the man who had decreed the punishment of Dooney MacDarrow, and who had dispatched the threatening message relative to Shamus O'Brien:—in brief, the leader of the insurgents.

He had taken upon himself the dangerous duty of opening communication with the soldiers; and, dangerous indeed it was, for, despite the slender force at his command, had not the necessity for gaining time been so urgent, Burke, in his anger, would most surely have ordered his fellows to open fire upon the man as he came on despite the flag he displayed.

"That is the fellow who held me in the mountains," the lieutenant declared, as soon as he could fairly distinguish the man.

"Do you recognize him, O'Glory?" Burke asked.

"How can I wid the black mask over his face?" the lawyer replied. "But, captain dear, for the love of Heaven spake fairly to him. Tin thousand pounds wouldn't more than pay me if these raparees bring fire and sword into the house. Spake

fairly to him, and if ye find that they mane to push us to the last extremity, why, thin, in Heaven's name, give them Jim O'Brien and don't be afther putting us all to the danger of having our throats cut. You don't know these min whin they get their blood up and the crape on their faces! Shure, they would as l'ave murder a man as not!"

"We will hold out to the last," Burke answered, firmly, "and you had better get a gun, O'Glory, so as to be able to take an active part in the fight."

"A gun!" howled Mrs. O'Glory; "sorra a bit of it! Upon me wourd, I'm not going to be made a widdy of afore me time!"

"Try your persuasive eloquence upon these fellows, then; for, if they do attack, the house is like to be a tomb to a good many of us."

There was not the least sign of a compromise in Desmond Burke's manner, and both the lawyer and his wife groaned in horror.

They were strong enough partisans of England, but, great as was their love for the dominant cause, it was not strong enough to stand such a draft upon it as they were now called upon to honor.

"Upon me sowl, if I had expected anything like this I would have seen ye all in the fiery pit afore I would have given ye l'ave to bring Jim O'Brien into this house," the old lawyer muttered.

The address of the envoy at this point put a stop to further conversation.

"Will ye have the kindness, the politeness and the civility to be afther hearing a few words from me, if ye please?" asked the insurgent leader, and there was a mockery in the speech that grated harshly upon the ears of the listeners, for it argued a power that boded ill for O'Neal Hall and its defenders.

"Proceed, sir; what do you wish?" Burke responded; and then, as the envoy hesitated for a moment, apparently to collect his thoughts, the captain put the question again quickly to O'Glory: "Do you know him?"

"Sorra a bit; he's a stranger; it is a thrick that the boys do be afther having. The man that spakes, and who may be recognized after the scrimmage is over, is always a stranger from some other district; thin, whin the affair is over, he gets back to his own town, fifty miles off, maybe."

The lawyer was quite right in this statement, and from this cunning precaution it has always been a difficult matter for the authorities to trace and punish those who are active in agrarian outrages in Ireland.

"We have only got a few wourds to say to ye, Captain Burke," the envoy said, "and ye, I take it, are Captain Burke."

"You are quite right, sir, in your supposition. I am Captain Burke," the officer answered.

"And by that same token, if me eyes do not deceive me, that's Leftenant Smithers wid ye?"

"Yes, you are quite right, sir," Smithers replied.

"The top of the morning to ye, Leftenant!" and the insurgent leader ducked his head at the officer. "Ye had the luck to slip through our fingers, the other night, but we'll lay hould of that blaggard, Paddy Doolin, who betrayed the cause he swore to guard wid his life, within three days, if he is in the barony."

"Ah, there is where you are out, my esteemed friend," Smithers informed his visitor; "Doolin had an idea that you might not enjoy the little trick he played upon you, and so he gave leg-bail at once, and by this time, I have no doubt, he is on the high sea, bound for America. So, if you, or any of your fellows, are anxious to see him, you will have to cross the ocean, and no doubt, in the new world, from the qualities he has displayed here, he will speedily rise, and you will find him an alderman, or something of that sort."

"He's small game compared to that we're afther now," the Irishman replied, meaningly. "But, ye know us, Leftenant; ye can tell Captain Burke that we are not to be trifled with, and phat we spake we mane."

"I am listening to you, my good fellow, with all the ears in my head," the captain observed, in the most courteous manner. "And, although I am somewhat surprised at perceiving such a number of men congregated, with arms in their hands, yet I am ready to listen attentively to anything you may have to say, and to accommodate you in any way possible."

"Faix! captain, dear, maybe ye wouldn't be afther being so accommodating if it wasn't for the arms that we have," the Irishman reminded.

"I really regret to see you assembled thus, evidently in defiance of the law; and, from past experience, you ought to know that every man in this illegal assemblage is bringing destruction down upon his head."

"Oh, we've counted the cost, and if we pay the fiddler be shure we mane to dance long enough to get the worth of our money!" the insurgent leader retorted, with bitter accent. "And now, captain, dear, fair and aisy, we want Mister Jim O'Brien, if you please!"

"I am really sorry, my friends; it really pains me that I am unable to comply with your request, but, situated as I am, it is utterly impossible for me to give O'Brien up without an order from my superior officers at head-quarters," Burke replied, in the smoothest manner possible.

"Oh, we won't put you to all that trouble, yer honor," the other replied, with mock politeness. "I will give the order; ye must look upon me as your superior officer, jist for this wance, and there's not the laste nade in the wourd for ye to sind as far as Dublin. I say to ye, release Jim O'Brien, and mighty soon, too, or we'll be afther pulling O'Neal Hall down about your ears so quickly that ye'll have hard work to jump out from under the falling timbers."

O'Glory could restrain himself no longer, so advanced to the front of the balcony.

"For the love of Heaven, byes, be r'asonable, and don't be afther making Judys of yerselves. The captain is here wid his sodgers, and they are all armed, too!" he shouted.

"And so are we!" interrupted the Irish leader, "armed to the teeth! and we mane to use our arms, do ye mind!" Then he waved his hand, evidently as a signal to his followers, and they immediately responded with a fierce and savage yell, brandishing their weapons wildly in the air as they gave voice like hungry wolves.

The heart of the lawyer sunk within him, and what little courage he had possessed fled on the instant.

"For the love of Heaven, byes, think phat ye are about; ye will be all hanged for this!" he screamed, in mortal terror. "Ye can't fight the Government; ye will be crushed in the long run!"

"But it is our innings to-night, and we mane to make hay while the sun shines! Will ye give up Shamus O'Brien, or will ye make us tear O'Neal Hall apart stone from stone?"

"Ye're mad—ye're all mad!" O'Glory yelled; "Captain Burke is here wid his men, a regiment, and their guns are loaded with balls, and they will use thim, too—and there's more troops coming up; there'll be a thousand min here in an hour!"

"Oh, to the devil I pitch yer lies, O'Glory, you scut!" the Irishman cried. "We know how many min Burke has got—tin all told—a mouthful for us, and we know that he has sint for more sodgers to come up; we know it well, for we have captured every messenger that he has sint; trot 'em out, byes, and show the quality that we mane business and hould their lives in the hollow of our hands."

And, sure enough—the soldiers were produced, all captured, all bound and helpless prisoners. The attacking party had played their cards with extreme shrewdness; no reinforcement could come that night to the relief of the besieged in O'Neal Hall.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SHAMUS TO THE FORE.

For a moment the silence and coldness of death seemed to rest upon the heart of every one who stood upon the balcony, as they looked down upon the greensward and beheld the scarlet uniforms of the captured soldiers resplendent in the moonlight.

For once in his life Burke realized that he had made a great blunder. If he had chosen peasants for his messengers, men who could be trusted, for instance, like the process-server, Dooney MacDarrow, the chances were that they, knowing the country well, would have been able to get through, but the troopers had fallen an easy prey to the peasants.

The first to break the silence was O'Glory, who, at this new turn of affairs, was almost distracted. Utter ruin awaited O'Neal Hall now, it was plain. In his despair he made one last effort.

"Oh, captain, dear, they have ye! you see that they have ye! phat is the use of kicking ag'in' the pricks? It's ag'in' both law and gospel. You're bate—clane bate; I've the man go, and thank Heaven to be rid of him!"

Mrs. O'Glory at once added her voice to her spouse's. "Oh, captain, darlint, think of the illigant furniture, and don't I've these murdering rascallions make ducks and drakes out of it!"

But upon the stern face of Burke there were no signs of yielding. Never, with his life, would he surrender the man he hated.

"Oh, lieutenant!" whined O'Glory, in despair, perceiving that the captain was likely to prove inflexible, "won't you say a word? We'll all be kilt in could blood—"

"And the illigant furniture," put in the lawyer's better-half; "think of the illigant furniture, and I've the man go!"

"By Jove! I wouldn't!" Smithers replied, obstinately, setting his teeth together. "I would hold out while a man remained to fire a musket or strike a blow!"

The bull-dog blood of the old Anglo-Saxon line still flowed in the veins of the speaker, although to look at him and listen to his rapid talk, one would imagine that but little of the old-time dogged English pluck resided in his rather effeminate-looking frame.

"No, Mr. O'Glory, I will never yield up O'Brien while one stone of this house remains upon another, or there is a single man left to back me in the fight!" Burke exclaimed, decidedly.

A subdued sort of howl came from the lips of the owners of the old Hall at this declaration, and right lustily, in their secret hearts, they cursed England and everything appertaining to Albion.

"And these fellows evidently intend to carry out their threats; so there is a prospect of a particularly lively fight," Burke continued. "If you will take my advice, you will get out of the house, and out of harm's way, as soon as possible."

"Faith, and I will!" O'Glory responded, in desperation, and he immediately retreated from the balcony, followed by his wife, who was giving vent to a series of short howls that were ridiculous in the extreme.

"They would only be in the way and impede our efforts," Burke declared to Smithers, when the two retired.

The envoy had been waiting in patience to observe the effect which the sight of the captured soldiers would produce.

After being marched up and down for a few moments, the soldiers were again escorted to the rear.

"Phat do ye be afther thinking of the likes of that, me fine bucks?" the insurgent chief inquired. "Did ye count thim? Shure, there isn't wan miss mg; we took good care of that!"

"And such good care, my fine fellow, that I am afraid you will have to answer in the felon's dock for this some day," Burke warned.

"Ye hav'n't got me yit," the other returned, defiantly. "At present the boot is on the other leg. It is we that have ye; in a trap, too, as nate and as cute as the head of man can devise!"

"That remains to be seen; we may be in a trap, but I can tell you that some of you fellows will get hurt if you attempt to take us out!" exclaimed Burke, equally defiant.

"I will give you wan last chance, and be the blame of your blood upon your own heads if you refuse. Fair and aisy now: we want Mister Shamus O'Brien if you please!"

"Fair and easy now!" returned Desmond Burke, mockingly, "ye can't have him!"

"Ye refuse?"

"I do—I will see you hanged first and then I won't!"

"Yer blood on yer own head, mind, for it is coming to take him we are."

"And your blood on your heads, mind, for I intend to defend this house while there's a breath left in my body!"

The assailants knew perfectly well that when Burke said he would defend the Hall to the last extremity, he meant it, every word.

"For the last time, will ye give him up?"

"For the last time, no, and be hanged to you!" cried Burke, cold in rage, and shaking his head in a lion-like fashion.

"Good-by thin to ye, Captain Desmond Burke! Twelve Pins ye will never see ag'in. Say a prayer or two, for upon me word ye won't have time afther we get at ye!"

And with this warning the delegate returned to the mass of men clustered under the trees.

Burke seized upon the opportunity to give a few last commands, for it was plain that the attack would soon begin.

The preparations of the attacking party were soon completed. Intimately acquainted as most of the peasants were with the Hall, and all the means of access to it, it did not take them long to agree upon the plan of attack.

They divided their force into four parties, intending to attack at four different points, at the same moment.

As the four detachments filed off, Burke's wits penetrated the plan in an instant.

"It is all up with us, old fellow, as far as keeping them out of the house is concerned," he observed to Smithers. "Four points gives us three men to each point, and they are certain to force an entrance somewhere; but, even after they get inside of the house, I think we can make a stand on the landing at the head of the stairway, and from behind the barricade with our superior weapons we ought to be able to hold them at bay for some time."

"That is so, by Jove! and I say, old boy, the sounds of the firing ought to travel, and in that way may bring us assistance," Smithers suggested.

"It is likely!"

Burke had taken the precaution to have the stairway barricaded with furniture, and his idea that the troops might be able to make a stand on the landing and so prevent the attacking force from reaching the upper part of the mansion, where the prisoner was confined, was not an unreasonable one.

On came the four attacking parties, winding noiselessly over the ground like four huge black snakes.

"Stand to your arms, my men!" warned Burke.

And the leader of the insurgents was just about to give the sign to raise the wild Irish yell—the signal for the attack—when a most unexpected thing took place.

Around one of the wings of the Hall, out on the lawn, in full view of the four attacking parties and the defenders of the house as well, walked Shamus O'Brien.

Shamus O'Brien—alive, well and at liberty!

A great shout went up to the sky from the lips of the Irishmen, and they waved their motley collection of weapons wildly in the air when they saw that the man whom they had come to rescue at the cost even of blood and life, was already free.

A bitter curse escaped from the lips of Desmond Burke as he looked down upon the hated form of his rival.

It was an easy matter to guess the manner in which O'Brien had attained his liberty.

"It is that deuced O'Glory!" declared the lieutenant. "The old rascal was determined that his 'illigant' furniture shouldn't be spoilt, and so he has released the prisoner!"

"Curse him, I will be even with him for it, some day!" hissed the captain, in bitter, impotent rage.

Shamus stopped deliberately in the center of the lawn and waved his hand toward the balcony.

"Good-by to you, captain dear! I am sorry that I can't accept of your hospitality any longer!" he exclaimed. "The fact is, the country here is getting a little too warm to be comfortable, and so I'm going across the seas again. I really regret the little hanging matter you had in view will have to be postponed, but, as the old song says,

"If it's hanging ye want,
It's yerself ye may hang."

Good-by and better luck next time!"

And then the insurgents melted away as if by magic.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MESSAGE.

Of course under the circumstances pursuit was not to be thought of, and the only satisfaction left to Burke was to attack the old lawyer for having released the prisoner, but O'Glory protested by all that was holy that he hadn't a hand in the matter at all; and, in truth, it was the madam who had smashed in the lock of the door with an ax, but the old man had given her the key to unlock the handcuffs which he had, fortunately as he thought, retained in his possession.

O'Brien was away in the hills, and there was an end of the matter.

So far Burke had not succeeded in scoring a single point in the game, and he retired to his rest that night a highly disgusted man, but before morning came he had resolved upon another plan of action, which he immediately proceeded to carry out with his accustomed vigor.

It was just a week from the night when the stirring events related in our last chapter had taken place that the heiress, sitting alone in her own apartment, was apprised that Mr. MacDarrow, the process-server, would like to have the pleasure of speaking with her.

Now, Maggie felt both horror and contempt for this man, and she replied that she hoped he would excuse her; any business that he might have to transact Mr. O'Glory would attend to in person.

But the process-server was obstinate, and sent back word that his business was with her in person, and that if she did not choose to see him he felt sure that she would regret it.

Now this rather excited the lady's curiosity, so she told her maid that she might show the fellow in.

Dooney made his appearance with a great profusion of bows, and in the most abject manner begged pardon for disturbing her so soon after supper, but added, as an excuse, that business called him to a distant point that night, and he was anxious to get on the road as soon as possible.

"Proceed, sir; you may spare your apologies," the heiress said, coldly.

She had a deep-rooted aversion to the man, and the appearance of the process-server did not tend to decrease it.

"I beg your pardon, miss, but what I have to say to ye must be said in private," he remarked, with a meaning glance at the girl who stood in the doorway.

The maid had not been ordered to retire, and, sharing her mistress's aversion to the man, she lingered near, from a sort of an insane idea that perhaps the process-server might do Miss Moore some harm.

The heiress hesitated; she did not like the idea of granting a private interview to Mr. Dooney MacDarrow, nor could she understand why there should be any reason for so doing, and she so expressed herself.

Dooney begged a thousand pardons for troubling her, but declared that the important business upon which he had come must be made known to her ears only.

After thinking the matter over for a moment Maggie dismissed the girl. As long as she had admitted the fellow to her presence she might as well comply with his request, so she bade the girl withdraw, much to the disgust and amazement of the maid, who, if she had had her way, would have turned Mr. Dooney MacDarrow out, neck and heels.

The process-server made sure that the girl had closed the door securely after her by a careful examination, much to Miss Moore's astonishment, who could not conceive of any reason for the strange caution.

"We can't be too careful, miss," Dooney observed, in a most mysterious way, with an extremely cunning look upon his ugly face. "Whin a man's life and liberty is at stake, bedad, wan can't be too cautious."

The speech seemed to refer to Shamus O'Brien, but Miss Moore knew that there could be nothing in common between Shamus and such a man as this Dooney MacDarrow, the tool of a cruel law, so she cast a searching glance at the fellow but spoke not.

"Troth! it's running a great risk I am, and I wouldn't be afther doing this, only I know that I am on the right side now, and I am 'ager to show the byes that it is a changed man I am."

All this sounded very strange to the lady's ears, and she could not comprehend it at all.

"I do not understand what you are saying, nor do I see how it concerns me in the least," she remarked.

"Yis, I know that I am a blundering fellow, and not being used to conversing wid the quality, maybe I don't be afther making meself understood. But, wan would will do that. I come from Mister Shamus O'Brien, if you please."

The lady looked earnestly at the fellow, but Dooney bore the scrutiny without flinching.

If Maggie Moore thought that she was acute enough to detect truth or falsehood in that face, she was very much mistaken.

The process-server had not lived in this world, man and boy, for nearly forty years without learning to school his face to suit the occasion.

"You come from Shamus O'Brien?"

"Yis, miss, more power to ye."

"And where is he?"

"In a Dutch smack off the coast that he has hired to take him to France so that he can git off to Amirika," Dooney answered, immediately, and if the fellow was lying, he was doing it in a perfectly superb manner.

"Well?"

Dooney understood the meaning of the simple exclamation; the lady wanted more information.

"He is on board of the Dutchman and he is all ready to sail, for Captain Burke has made the country too hot to hold him, but he wants to have a word wid ye, if ye please, afore he goes."

"How can I see him?" The lady mistrusted Dooney's honesty and was determined to question him closely. She thought, poor child, that she had wits enough to measure strength with such a rascal.

"Aisy enough; he has sint me to bring you to him. The Dutchman lays off the coast, only a short distance off, and it is the intention to sail at midnight. I've a wee bit of a jaunting-car outside, and I can dhrove ye there in a jiffy and afther Mister O'Brien has said phat he has to say I will dhrove ye home ag'in."

The story seemed plausible enough, but Maggie distrusted the messenger.

"When must I go?" she asked, after quite a long pause.

"Right off; to wance, if it is pl'asing to ye."

"Mr. MacDarrow, I do not trust you!" the lady exclaimed, abruptly. "Your past career has been such that I am unable to place any reliance upon your word. You have ever been a foe to Shamus O'Brien and the cause he represents."

"I know, miss, phat I have been, and it is sorry I am entirely for it," Dooney declared, with a great humility. "The byes gave me the devil's own b'ating and I made up me mind that I would turn me coat and jine the other side, and now, please the pigs, I'm ag'in' the Government out and out!"

"This conversion is somewhat sudden."

"Faix, miss, it has been a rocky road that I have traveled for the last few weeks, and I made up me mind that I had better get out of it. Oh, now, I'm as big a rapparee as the best of thim!"

The lady was not convinced, despite the strong assertion, and she had a final test in her mind which she was sure would prove whether the man was false or true.

"Why did not Mr. O'Brien give you a letter or some sign so that I would be assured that I could trust your statement?" she asked.

"Deed and he did!" Dooney replied, giving his head a vigorous thump as he spoke as if to reproach himself for his forgetfulness. "He sed, at the last moment—phat a blundering fool I was to forget it!—'Mebbe, ye had better take a line so that me wife—Miss Moore—will know that it is all right.' I have it here somewhere."

After a little search Dooney produced the paper from the inner pocket of a greasy wallet.

It only bore a single line:

"You may trust the bearer. SHAMUS."

There was no mistaking the handwriting; Maggie would have picked it out among a thousand.

The little scrap of paper at once removed her doubts, and she immediately prepared to accompany the messenger.

Her preparations were soon made, and by the private entrance she quitted the Hall much to the amazement of the maid, whom she directed to sit up for her, as she did not expect to be home until after midnight.

She took her place in the car and away they went, heading directly by obscure roads, some of them little better than cow-paths, to the coast.

A sharp hour's drive, and the familiar sound of the ocean swell breaking upon the rock-bound shore fell upon their ears, then an abrupt turn and the sea lay before them.

A mile or so off a little sloop lay rocking upon the troubled surface of the swelling bosom of the deep.

The ill-assorted pair quitted the car and Dooney conducted the heiress to a boat which was on the strand.

They got in, Dooney took the oars, and the vessel was soon reached.

A rough-looking, rough-bearded foreigner, the Dutch skipper evidently, assisted Maggie on board.

"Der gentleman's in de cabin," he said, in guttural accents.

Maggie descended the stairs, the door swung to after her, and to her horror the sole occupant of the place was Captain Desmond Burke!

The heiress had been trapped—trapped by a scheme worthy of Satan himself.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PASSENGERS.

Maggie did not scream or faint, although the very blood in her veins seemed chilled with horror.

The surprise was so terrible, the shock so great, that for a moment the lady stood as motionless as a statue, her hand pressed against her heart, her eyes staring with a strange, unnatural gaze at the handsome smiling face of the successful trickster.

At first Desmond became alarmed; from the peculiar way in which the girl stood and the strange expression upon her face, he feared that the shock had been too great, and that the old king of terrors, grim death, was about to snatch his prey from his grasp right in the moment of victory.

But, great as was the shock, it was not sufficient to kill. A long breath came from the lips of the lady; she staggered back, and but for the support of the cabin wall behind her would have fallen.

Burke sprang forward to assist her, but, with a feeble motion she waved him away.

"Do not touch me—do not touch me, please!" she murmured, sinking into a chair, which fortunately was near at hand.

Burke bowed politely, retreated to the table, and sat down by the side of it.

"As you please," he remarked, quietly: "your lightest wish is to me as potent as the will of fate itself."

The first force of the shock being over the girl's natural spirits began to return to her.

"What is the meaning of this? Have I been betrayed? Where is my husband—where is Shamus O'Brien?" she asked.

"Answering your last question first, I would say that I hav'n't the slightest idea in regard to his whereabouts, excepting that it is probable he is hiding somewhere in the hills waiting for a good chance to escape from the country."

"Then he is not on board of this vessel?"

"Oh, no; although I have no doubt that he would be willing to give quite a large sum to secure such a piece of luck; that is, I mean without any reference either to you or I. But, to gain the deck of this vessel would be to secure an escape from the hands of the law officers, who are not sparing any pains to run him down, and unless he does contrive in some way to get out of the country very speedily, most certainly he will be captured, for the Government is resolved to catch and make an example of him if possible."

"It is as I suspected, then, when I saw you; the note written in Shamus's hand and signed by his name was a forgery committed for the express purpose of decoying me on board of this vessel."

"No; there, in part, you are wrong. Shamus did write that line; it was found on his person when he was captured by me. He had evidently intended to send a messenger to you at some time, but did not do so. Of course after his capture he was searched; that bit of paper, among other things, was found, and I preserved it carefully, thinking that sometime it might be of use."

"But what is the meaning of this outrage? Why have I been decoyed on board of this vessel?" the girl demanded, with great spirit.

"A very few words will explain everything. My dear Miss Moore, I am a ruined man; my creditors are pressing me hotly; I must have money to satisfy them or else I must throw up my commission and fly from the country. In this terrible state of affairs, one hope of salvation alone appeared to me—a wealthy marriage; and that is the reason that I pressed my suit with you so ardently. You did not choose to smile upon me, and so, in despair, I made up my mind to elope with you. I am aware that it is generally the other way; the lady flies with the gentleman, and in fact in this instance that is the way it will appear to the public. To-morrow morning the news will be spread far and wide in Connemara that the beautiful Miss Maggie Moore, the heiress of Kilkerran, forgetful of all other ties, has fled in the night with Captain Desmond Burke!"

"But it is false—a base, a cruel lie!" cried Maggie, indignantly.

"Ah, yes, I know well enough that you do not go willingly, but it is my game to make the world think that you do. Women are proverbially fickle, you know; you will not be the first lady who has changed her mind at the eleventh hour and forsaken the successful suitor to fling herself into the arms of the unsuccessful one."

"But my friends will not believe the tale!"

"Your friends will find it hard to dispute the facts. You left your home of your own free will; that is easily proven; Mr. Dooney MacDarrow will testify that he was sent by me to conduct you here, and that you came willingly."

For the first time the full force of the plot flashed upon the girl. It had been planned with Satanic skill. She realized into what a trap she had fallen. There was very little doubt that all the world would believe that she had fled with Desmond Burke, of her own accord. And Shamus, what would Shamus think? Would he believe the horrid tale?

Almost spellbound the girl sat, stunned by the terrible truth.

"I explain everything frankly," Burke continued, after a moment's pause. "I don't pretend that I am madly in love with you or anything of that kind, but I want money, and money I must have. You have the money, and so for the sake of the gold I take you."

"You shall not have one single penny; I will die first!" was Maggie's spirited reply.

"Ah, then you will force me to use harsh measures; but if, on the contrary, you are reasonable, you shall be none the worse for this little trip. I want twenty thousand pounds. You must provide me with that money. It is easily enough arranged. A line to O'Glory will do. He will procure the money; then you can return; you can relate whatever account you please of this night's adventure, and I will back it up over my own signature. You are utterly and hopelessly in my power. The captain and crew are all Dutchmen and don't understand a dozen words of English, and as they have been told that you are a little crazy at times, they will not pay any heed to anything you may do. Now, take time to reflect, and I will go up on deck. As long as you are reasonable you shall be as sacred as a saint to me; but if you are obstinate, why then blame yourself for anything that you may force me to do."

Then Burke quitted the cabin, carefully fastening the door after him, leaving the girl a prey to terrible apprehensions.

The captain went on deck and found that the Dutchman was just preparing to get under way.

"Hallo! Why have you delayed? I told you to be off at once!" Burke protested.

"More passengers, mynheer," responded the skipper, placidly pointing to the boat of the smack just making fast to the vessel, containing a sailor and two men well wrapped in top-coats.

An oath came from Burke's lips.

"Curse it! I paid you your price and you have no right to take other passengers aboard!"

"Refuse der gelt? Oh, no!" responded the Dutchman, with a grin.

Up over the side of the vessel came the two men, and as they gained the deck of the smack they threw open the great top-coats which they wore, and lo! Shamus O'Brien and the leader of the insurgents, the brawny blacksmith from Galway, stood revealed. The recognition was mutual and equally astonishing.

"Captain Desmond Burke, be the powers!" cried the blacksmith.

"Oho, you know dose mans!" cried the skipper, blundering like a true Dutchman. "Dat ish goot; der lady vill hafe gumpany, down mit de cabin!"

Shamus guessed the truth immediately, and darted down below. The captain had placed his hand upon his pistols, but the blacksmith was as quick as he, and had him "covered" in an instant.

Shamus received a rapid explanation from the now joyful girl, and bidding her be of good cheer, returned to the deck.

He had not hinted of his purpose to the lady, but he had determined to call Burke to an account, instantly, for his bold outrage.

The Dutchmen, upon the display of weapons, had retreated to secure places, and with eager eyes watched the progress of the scene.

"Well, Mr. Shamus O'Brien, your luck certainly passes all expectation," the captain remarked, bitterly. "There was not one chance out of a hundred of this little scheme of mine failing, but I'll be hanged if it wasn't in the cards for you to upset it."

"Captain Burke, you owe me satisfaction for this affair to-night," Shamus said, briefly.

"By Jove, sir, that is about the only kind of debts that I am able to pay, now."

"You have a revolver, and I one, also. Suppose we get one of the men to row us to the beach, and there settle our quarrel?"

"Agreed, although the tide of luck is running so strong in your favor, that the chances are ten to one that you will wing me; but I'm for you, sir."

The nature of the service required was made known to the skipper.

The two rivals got into the boat, one of the Dutch sailors took the oars, and soon the craft was skimming over the waters, rippling in the moonlight.

The beach was gained, and the two landed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RESULT.

At last the rivals stood face to face, man against man, armed for deadly strife.

Pretty evenly matched, too, were they, although in one respect O'Brien had decidedly the advantage.

The weapons were revolvers; not at all the tools that either an ancient or a modern Irish gentleman would have chosen to fight with, but in this case necessity was master.

The round, full moon, now high in the heavens, afforded ample light for the encounter.

The rivals paced off the distance, while the Dutch sailor in the boat lay on his oars, a short distance from the strand, and eagerly watched the scene.

Not knowing either of the men, nor the cause of the quarrel, nor caring, yet he took as much interest in the scene as though his own brother was concerned in it.

But, it was the interest of the bull-fight—the thirst for blood, so common to low and brutal natures.

The distance paced, the opponents turned and faced each other.

"Are you ready?" Burke asked.

"Quite ready," O'Brien replied.

"Shall I give the word or you?"

"It is immaterial—you, if you please."

"At three we fire."

"I understand."

"One, two—three!"

Up came the revolvers at the word, both had carried the weapons below the level of the waist, but O'Brien was by far the quicker of the two in firing, for, acting on the old instruction of the duello code, Burke was dwelling on his aim, and so it happened that the well-aimed bullet of Shamus struck Burke's wrist just as he pulled the trigger, totally destroying the careful aim that he had taken, for he really thirsted for the blood of his successful rival and had determined to kill him if possible.

From the wrist the ball glanced off and entered the captain's breast.

Burke staggered forward, essayed to raise the shattered hand from which the revolver had dropped, and then sunk down helpless. O'Brien ran at once to his aid; he tore open the coat and vest of the other, and discovered to his great relief that the wound was apparently not dangerous.

He stanchd the wound as well as he was able, for it is one of the inconsistencies of this life that, after men have done their best to murder each other, with

the idea generally of healing wounded honor, the moment one is disabled the other does his best to help the hurt which his own hand has inflicted.

As the sailor reached the shore and hastened to the side of the stricken man, Burke opened his eyes.

"Well, luck is with you," he murmured, faintly;

"be off with you, as soon as you can. I give up the fight, for it is no use to war against fate; the heiress is yours; and nothing is left me but to go to the devil as soon as possible. Is my wound mortal do you think?"

"No, I think not."

"So much the worse; situated as I am I might as well die as live," Burke muttered, discontented.

"Never say die, man!" the other responded, cheerfully; "pluck up a good heart and look fortune straight in the face; she is a fickle jade and loves the men bold enough to face her."

"By Jove, you are right, old fellow!" the wounded man exclaimed, in a measure touched by the encouraging words of the other; "you're right, and I won't say die yet. But, be off with you, for the coast-guard patrol is likely to be along this way at any moment, and it would be ugly for you to be discovered just as you are getting off. Shamus, old fellow, I am sorry that there has been bad blood between us, but it was fate; I am not altogether a bad fellow, and now I say to you, be off and God speed! Don't fear for me; the coast-guard fellows will find me. Tell Maggie that my last exploit was the desperate act of a desperate man, and that I didn't really intend to harm her, only to frighten her a little so as to get money to stave off these infernal creditors."

"Good-by. I bear no malice for what is past, and wish you better luck in the future."

Then O'Brien and the sailor took to the boat and away they went to the fishing-smack.

Once on board, the Dutchman spread his white wings, and the good craft sped o'er the waters, soon leaving the green hills of old Ireland far behind.

As Desmond Burke had predicted, the coast-guard patrol soon came along and with great care they assisted the captain to O'Neal Hall.

Naturally the captain was obliged to tell how it happened that he had been wounded, and so he said that he had had a desperate encounter with the outlaw, and that Shamus had been the victor in the fight, and had escaped to the hills. Burke was generous enough not to reveal the manner of the fugitive's escape, for, having staked all upon the hazard of the die, he was honest enough to accept the issue.

But it was as if the wish of O'Brien, better luck! had caused the captain's fortunes to change. Of course the story of his desperate encounter with the outlaw was soon made public, and the English-Irish newspapers hailed him as the hero of the hour; as great a time was made over the affair as though the captain, single-handed, had put down a rebellion instead of having come out second best from an encounter with a single man.

Now it happened that in Dublin there lived a very romantic young lady, an heiress in her own right, her father, now deceased, having accumulated a large fortune in brewing a famous brand of Dublin porter. This lady was an ardent supporter of the Government, and when she read of Burke's brave act, nothing less would satisfy her romantic soul than a visit to O'Neal Hall and an acquaintanceship with the gallant captain.

This lady was young, not bad-looking, and she had wealth galore; and so Burke, as Smithers expressed it, "went in for the heiress, cut out the running and won the prize in a canter."

Smithers was "best man" at the wedding. O'Glory received the money which he had never expected to see again, and once more the prospect was good that the Burkes of Twelve Pins would be able to hold up their heads with any family in Connemara, old or young, Irish or Saxon.

The clever device of Tom Pepper soon put him on the track of the Goose-girl's fortune, and in a very short time he had the happiness of announcing to Kitty that the cobwebs of the law had all been cleared away, and her father's money was hers at last.

Of course there was only one way to reward such devotion, and so Miss Kitty Sheelan became Mrs. Tom Pepper.

Dooney, the process-server, having lost Burke's protection after the captain's marriage with the heiress, he no longer having any use for such a dirty tool, soon found it necessary to take himself out of the way—the more so as the inhabitants had become so inflamed against him that he feared his life, as well as his bones, was in danger.

After the unexpected demonstration that the peasantry had made of their power, both Mr. and Mrs. O'Glory thought that it was only prudent to somewhat restrain their ardor in the cause of Britain, and they were, if not better children of the soil, at least more cautious in singing the praises of the ruling powers.

As for the secret organization, it seems to have fairly melted away after the night demonstration upon O'Neal Hall; at all events the local authorities with all their zeal were not able to discover any clew to its existence; but, for all that, the organization still exists—has existed for years past, and will continue to exist, until either Ireland by some lucky turn of Fortune's wheel is enabled once more to make a bold struggle for independence as a separate kingdom, or, failing that chance, instead of the bullet, triumphing by the ballot, and by peaceful means forcing England to redress some of the wrongs which unjust laws have fastened upon the green isle.

Shamus reached America in safety, and there in a short time Maggie and her child joined him.

She confided her estate matters to the hands of a couple of smart Dublin lawyers, who soon forced O'Glory to a settlement.

But, even in the new world, although surrounded by every comfort, still the Irish exile hopes that the day will come when he can return, when Ireland, rising in her might, will call upon her sons from every land to flock around the standard of the golden harp. If that day ever does come, on the muster roll will be found the name of Shamus O'Brien.

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